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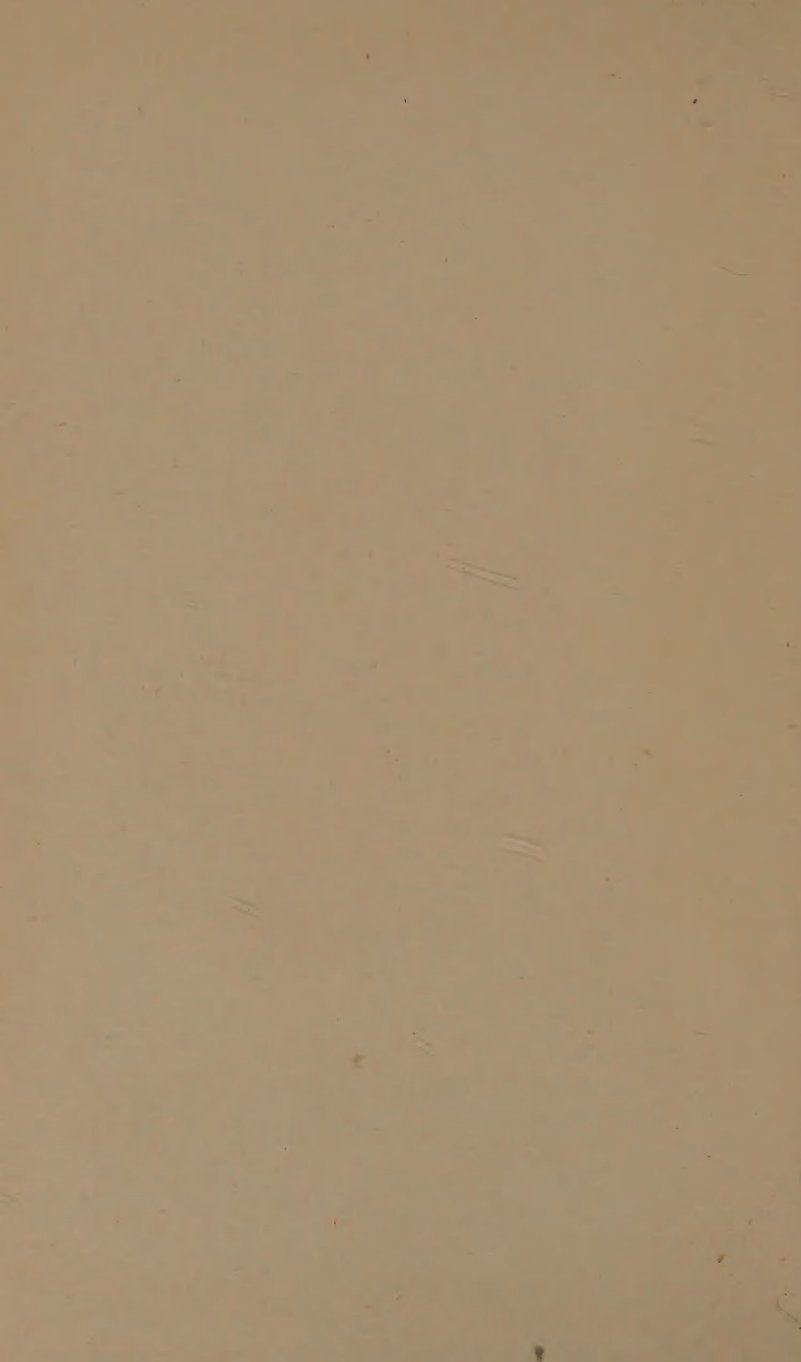


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OUTLINES OF RELIGIOUS FAITH
AND DOCTRINE, FOUNDED ON
INTUITION AND EXPERIENCE

BY

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P R E F A C E.



IN the following pages, an attempt is made to present in outline what appear to the writer to be the true foundations and the essential elements of Religious Faith.

The standpoint assumed is one which discards the conception of any purely objective authority to which, in the first instance, appeal must be made in support of that which is accepted as true, and good, and Divine. But the subjective origin and warrant of faith in God, and of belief in Divine Revelation and Inspiration being recognised, the guidance of Inspired Writers may be gratefully accepted, and the Truths they teach will, it is believed, be found to commend themselves to the intelligence, and to the moral and spiritual faculties of sincere and earnest

thinkers. The words of Christ, in particular, will come to those who are satisfied that in Him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead, with an aspect of unquestionable authority and validity.

On the method here pursued, some of the propositions of traditional and orthodox doctrine may fail to establish their title to a place in our belief or our formulated thought; but the vital element for Christian Faith and Life is secured when it is recognised that the Salvation needed by men is, in fact, provided for men in the Revelation of Grace and Truth that is found in Christ, and in the Power and Life of which He is the Mediator.

It is hoped that the attempt to show that the chief ideas and affirmations of Christian Doctrine are not only consistent with, but are implied in and demanded by the essential principles of Human Nature, may prove helpful to thoughtful and honest students to whom the authoritative methods of Dogmatic Theology appear illegitimate and offensive. It is, at any rate, from a desire to relieve and guide some of those whose

religious difficulties and theological perplexities threaten to rob them of faith and hope, that the author ventures to set forth spiritual realities and truths in the light in which they present themselves to him as supremely worthy of our faith and loyalty.

J. M. H.

EDINBURGH, *October* 1898.

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THEOLOGIA PECTORIS

“ The true Shekinah is Man.”

CHRYSOSTOM.

“ Man is man’s A B C ; there’s none that can
Read God aright, unless he first spell man.”

QUARLES.

“ The volume of the world
Is legible alone to those who use
The interlinear version of the light
Which is the Spirit’s, and given within ourselves.”

F. J. BAILEY.

“ Qui expertus non fuerit, non intelliget.”

ANSELM.

“ Il faut aimer les choses Divines, pour pouvoir les connaître.”

PASCAL.

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I.

INTRODUCTORY.

FOR some years the conviction has been spreading and deepening, in the minds of those best qualified to form an opinion on the subject, that in both systematic and apologetic theology there is room and need for a revision of principles and methods, and for, at least, a tentative effort towards a re-statement of religious doctrine and belief.

Among the more powerful of the influences which have led to this conviction are the modified views which have gained acceptance as to the nature and results of inspiration, and as to the significance and function of miracles, together with the study of comparative religion, the development of physical science, and the broadening of our thoughts of God and man and the universe in general.

The attitude of the present age towards theology is radically different from that of Bacon,

when he declared that, "If we proceed to treat of it, we must quit the barque of human reason, and put ourselves on board the ship of the Church, which alone possesses the divine needle for justly shaping the course." The tyranny of ecclesiastical authority, fatally weakened by the Protestant Reformation, is gradually ceasing to fetter the freedom of thought upon religious questions. For the defence and support, moreover, of spiritual truth, we are coming to rely less and less upon the attestation of miraculous and other external evidences, or upon the infallible authority that has been claimed for its inspired exponents.

The leaders of religious thought to-day approach the subject of apologetics in a very different way from that adopted by Christian thinkers even two or three generations ago. Few teachers would now endorse the assertion, for instance, of Dr. Chalmers, that "The authority of every revelation rests exclusively upon its external evidences." More and more frankly and unreservedly the position is gradually being adopted, that the essential elements of religion and theology claim our acceptance upon their own intrinsic merits, and are to be verified primarily, not by an appeal to authority, but by the satisfaction which they afford to the highest aspirations and the noblest impulses of human nature, and by the personal

experience of those who honestly accept them and practically submit their lives to their guidance and control. Although still surviving in Church creeds and traditional beliefs, dogmatism is almost everywhere discredited. And through serious unsettlement of faith and opinion, and not a little grave anxiety, men are working their way to a clearer apprehension of the grounds of their convictions as to the things that are most surely believed by them.

The method of discussing theology on purely dogmatic lines, which has prevailed so long under the regime of Latin Christianity and scholasticism, is responsible for a good deal of the disfavour and neglect with which doctrinal theology has for some time been treated. The systematic exposition of a traditional body of divinity cannot but fail to interest and satisfy, when an unquestioning acceptance of its truth and validity can no longer be counted upon. At the same time, the separate discussion of apologetics as a distinct branch of study having ceased to be regarded as competent to establish the infallible authority of the Scriptures, and the claims of a system of truth supposed to be derived from them, is gradually giving place to the investigation of the intrinsic merits of the specific ideas and propositions which form the contents of theological teaching.

Whilst, on the one hand, systematic theology, abandoning its pretensions to dogmatic authoritativeness, is assuming more and more an apologetic character, the consideration of the external evidences of Christianity, on the other hand, is being relegated to a subordinate position, and the value of their testimony is being practically minimised. Of course, the facts of Nature, history, and experience, in and through which spiritual truths and realities are revealed to men, must still hold their place as furnishing the source and material of all religious thought and theological doctrine. The phenomena of the external universe and the experiences of human life are unquestionably needed to awaken within us the intuitions and convictions of our theistic faith; and the facts and events of sacred history are equally indispensable for the suggesting of the ideas and doctrines of Christian teaching. But, alike in the one case and in the other, the spiritual and religious truth really springs from and finds its warrant in our own discernment and interpretation of the significance of the facts. "The historical actuality," as Principal Caird has said, "is one thing, the spiritual significancy is quite another." The outward and visible so appeal to the spiritual nature of man as to convince him of the truth of things that eye hath not seen, nor

ear heard, and which the heart of man could not have conceived of, save for the quickening touch of that which has been objectively presented in the sphere of actual life and history. But the objective facts possess significance and value as the media of spiritual and religious thought only in virtue of the interpretation which we are compelled to give them. And we are so compelled by reason of our being what we are as intelligent, moral, and religious beings.

The true foundation of a system of theology, as a science and a philosophy, would seem, therefore, to be the nature, condition, and needs of man. Hence, also, the proper starting-point for the exposition of such a system is found in the doctrine of man, rather than, as has very generally been assumed, either in the doctrine of God, or the doctrine of Christ as the manifestation of the nature and purpose of God, or in some *à priori* conception as to the nature of salvation. In the past, theologians have, for the most part, assigned the foremost place in their discussion of a scheme of thought about the verities of religion to the nature and attributes of God. In more recent years the tendency has been to treat theology as Christo-centric. But the more philosophical method is, it is urged, to begin with the consideration of what man is and what man

needs in order that, from the actual state in which he finds himself, he may attain to the ideal condition towards which his spiritual faculties point, and more or less distinctly impel him; and then to proceed to the consideration of that which it is believed has been provided and presented outside of himself as the means and the power whereby he may become what he feels he was meant to be, but cannot of himself attain unto.

Anthropology leads to the doctrine of sin; this furnishes the basis for, and suggests the essential features of, subjective soteriology; and then, subjective soteriology compels to the recognition of the need of an objective soteriology, and indicates the character as well as the reality of the objective provision which is required by men, and which has been, as we believe, provided for men.

"What salvation means," it has been rightly said, "and specifically what *our* salvation means, is a matter primarily determined, not by creeds, not by Scripture, not by Divine revelation, but by the facts of our own nature and condition. All salvation is deliverance from some form of evil. Salvation for men can only be deliverance from the evil to which they are subject, and what that is, is matter of fact prior to any

Divine or other declaration of what it is. The good of any being is what is necessary for its completion and satisfaction; the evil is whatever hinders, limits, or contradicts this. The former is wholly determined by the nature of each being; the latter is purely a fact of its condition. The nature of a being is, of course, the whole nature; not only what it is, but all that it is constituted to become. Nature, then, includes destination; it is truly interpreted only in the light of its τέλος, its end. Divine revelation, therefore, the Scriptures, the creed of the Church, nowhere undertake or profess to make the meaning of salvation. That is done by the facts of the case, and all that they claim to do is to interpret it truly and deal with it rightly.”¹

In a somewhat similar way, theology in the stricter sense of the term, the doctrine, that is, of the being and nature of God, is seen to be determined by the constituent elements and faculties of human nature. Even the existence of God cannot be presented as a purely objective fact. Our theistic faith depends upon the interpretation we intuitively put upon the facts of observation and experience. To beings destitute of the powers of intuitive perception

¹ Du Bose, “Soteriology of the New Testament,” p. I.

of Divine and spiritual things, the phenomena which to us are most suggestive would be without meaning. It is by the necessity of its own constitution that the soul is constrained to "read between the lines" of the experiences of conscious life, and to find and recognise behind them all, the real existence of a Being to whom it feels that it sustains definite relations, and whom it cannot but regard as supremely worthy of its love, and trust, and service. Under the guidance of the faculties and instincts of our nature, we interpret the facts and elements of experience and knowledge as revealing to us the wisdom, power, and goodness of One who is our Creator and our God. Mere words, definitions, or propositions would be empty forms were they not the signs and symbols of ideas, truths, and facts originally apprehended, not by verbal or logical exposition, but by the intuitive perceptions of the soul.

So long as theologians were content to expound a system of doctrine from a merely dogmatic point of view, accepting it as presented on the authority of tradition, Church, or inspired Scripture, it was natural that the consideration of the attributes, purposes, and plans of God should occupy the first place in

their treatises. But in proportion as it comes to be recognised that nothing of a purely objective sort can be appealed to as the sole or primary warrant of any of the ideas or propositions of spiritual or religious truth, a change of method will become obvious and inevitable.

As Dr. Fairbairn has said, whilst "Science is nature explained by man; theology is nature explained in and through him. Man, as the highest being in nature, is the revelation of its secret, the *Λόγος προφορικός* (the uttered word), by which knowledge of the eternal *Λόγος ἐνδιάθετος* (thought) is won."¹ Hence, the nature of man as the interpreter of the universe, the psychological basis of theism and religion, becomes the starting-point of a really philosophical system of theological doctrine. Just as the critical method of Kant turned philosophical thought from the discussions of empiricism and dialectic to the investigation of the faculties by which, and the conditions under which, all human thinking is carried on; so a revised theology must abandon the methods of scholastic dogmatism, and, starting from the affirmation and analysis of those spiritual elements of our nature by which we are constituted religious beings, must proceed to show how the

¹ "Philosophy of Religion and History," p. 71.

instincts and faculties of the soul lead to those ideas and convictions as to the character of God and our relations to Him, which constitute our system of theological thought.

To historical theology it belongs to trace the varied forms of religious faith and opinion which have been held, and their relation to the methods and the authorities upon which they were founded. The function of biblical theology, again, is simply the exposition of the doctrines enunciated or implied in the sacred Scriptures.

But, in order that biblical theology itself may be accepted, we must know upon what grounds and to what extent the authority of the Scriptures is to be acknowledged. And, in order to that, we must have a foundation of religious faith, and a system of religious thought independently developed,—certain fundamental elements, at least, of a philosophy of religion which carries its own inherent apology, and by reference to which the authority claimed for inspired teachers may itself be judged.

II.

THE NATURE OF MAN.

DESCARTES, the father of modern philosophy, laid down as the basis of his investigations and speculations the maxim, *Cogito, ergo sum*. The consciousness of thought involved, he maintained, the existence of something that thinks, or is conscious of thought. Thought without a thinker was, he held, inconceivable. Even sensation means not simply a feeling or an experience, but the feeling or experience of someone.

In more recent years, John Stuart Mill admitted that the continuity of consciousness "brings us face to face with the central principle of our intellectual nature. The supposition of mental permanence might be regarded," he says, "as a mere series of feelings, with a background of possibility of feeling, if it were not for memory and expectation. They are in themselves present feelings, but they involve a belief in more than their own existence." "If we speak of the mind as a series of feelings which is aware of itself as past and future, we are reduced to the alternative

of believing that the mind, or Ego, is something different from any series of feelings, or of accepting the paradox that something which is, *ex hypothesi*, but a series of feelings can be aware of itself as a series.”¹

Positivism stands almost alone as an attempt to dispense with any fundamental reality as underlying the series of our conscious states. But it would seem hardly possible for human beings to explain or comprehend the continuity of consciousness, except on the supposition of something that endures after each passing state of consciousness has gone.

But what is that something to which sensations, thoughts, and other conscious states belong, and which persists after they have ceased to be? Materialists ascribe them to the physical organism, the body, or the brain. Professor Huxley asserted that “consciousness is a function of matter,” and that “thought is as much a function of matter as motion is.” Elsewhere he has spoken of consciousness as being more properly described as a collateral product of the working of the mechanism of the brain and nerves. The latter he calls *neurosis*, whilst states of consciousness he designates as *psychosis*. And he says he never hopes to know anything of the steps by which

¹ “Examination of Hamilton’s Philosophy,” p. 213.

the passage from the molecular movements to states of consciousness is effected. Dr. Tyndall also owned that it is impossible for us to identify a motion in the brain with sensation, or to understand how the one becomes the other, or how they are related and connected with each other. He says, "A definite thought and a definite molecular action appear together, but we know not why."¹ Professor Clifford similarly asserted that "the physical facts go along by themselves, and the mental facts go along by themselves, but there is no interference of the one with the other. The mind is a stream of feelings which runs parallel to and simultaneous with a certain part of the action of the body."²

Mr. Spencer's account is not very different when he speaks of a sensation or other state of consciousness as "one fact with two faces,"—"the subjective and objective faces of the same fact."

Scientific materialism and physiological psychology confess, in fact, their inability to solve the difficult problem of determining the relation between these parallel series—these two faces; or even to deal with it with anything approaching plausibility. Those, indeed, who most strongly insist that the series of feelings, thoughts, etc., of

¹ "Scientific Materialism." Address to Brit. Association.

² "Fortnightly Review," Dec. 1874, p. 728,

which we are conscious, are in some way or other a function of matter, fully recognise the distinctness and separateness of these conscious states from the series of physical changes or molecular motions with which science is concerned.

With the exception of the pan-phenomenalism of Positivists and the absolute idealism of Hegel, every philosophical system agrees in the affirmation of a substantial entity, as the seat of consciousness, as the Self which possesses states of feeling, as the Ego in which thought exists. A persisting subject is thus almost universally acknowledged ; and in their relation to that subject is found the nexus by which successive states and experiences are bound to each other. Materialistic psychology affirms the real existence of matter as the basis alike of the phenomena of *neurosis* and of those of *psychosis*.

The affirmation of the existence of a soul, or spirit, as the substantial entity to which the phenomena of consciousness are to be referred, is one to which the intuitive instincts and impulses of mankind seem to prompt, and it is one which escapes the difficulties and inconsistencies to which the hypotheses of materialism and pan-phenomenalism are exposed. We know and can know nothing of substance save from its phenomena. But just "as

we are forced by a law of our nature to believe in the existence of a substance of which kinetic phenomena are the manifestation; so, by an equally stringent necessity, we are forced to believe that where the phenomena are not only different, but incompatible, there the substances are also different. As, therefore, the phenomena or properties of matter are essentially different from those of mind, it seems natural, if not indeed inevitable, to conclude that matter and mind are two distinct substances, that the soul is not material, nor the body spiritual.”¹

“To identify matter with mind, or mind with matter, it is necessary to pretend that sensation, thought, and volition are reducible, in the last analysis, to solidity, extension, figure, divisibility, etc., or that solidity, extension, figure, etc., are reducible to sensation, thought, will.”²

The Scriptures do not teach any system of psychology; but they seem to assume the substantial entity of soul as well as of body, and that matter and spirit are not the same, but essentially different. “The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Eccles. xii. 7).

The English word *soul* is most frequently used

¹ Hodge, “Systematic Theology,” vol. ii. p. 42.

² Cousin, “Elements of Psychology,” p. 370.

to denote that part of our nature by which we apprehend and respond to our relations to other spiritual realities. But we may not improperly employ the term to designate the entire spiritual, non-material nature of man. In this wider significance, soul includes the faculties of intellect, feeling, conscience, and will, as well as those still higher elements, the instinctive and intuitive capacities and impulses by which man is constituted a religious being.

A theology which takes human nature as its starting-point assumes, of course, that in man there are those original, native qualities, attributes, or faculties, which render him an intelligent, thinking, feeling, and volitional being. But it rests with greater definiteness and certainty upon the moral and spiritual parts of his nature. The existence of intellect, sensibility, conscience, and will is recognised, and their characteristics are investigated in the studies of mental and moral science. The distinctively spiritual and religious elements in the soul's constitution are often overlooked in the discussions of psychology and philosophy. But to religion these are of essential importance; and their recognition and their adequate analysis are not less vital to any valid and satisfactory system of theological doctrine.

The more spiritual elements of man's psychical

nature may be taken to include what are known as the sentiments of awe, wonder, and admiration; the impulses of affection and enthusiasm; the sense of order, of purpose, of goodness, and of obligation; and the instinct of reverence.

The intellectual and the purely emotional elements of our psychical nature might be regarded as the sufficient basis of our practical and social life as citizens of the present world, as those, that is, who have relations to recognise and maintain with their physical environment, and with human society in its external and practical aspects. But man is more, much more than a being who has to do merely with the objects of time and sense. And for his higher life, the life by which he is related to the unseen, the spiritual, and the Divine, he needs and possesses another order of faculties—faculties by which his soul is differentiated from the soul of the brute, or from that of an intelligent creature incapable of religion; by which, in fact, it is constituted, not a *ψύχη* simply, but a *πνεῦμα*.

The power, for instance, by which we recognise and appreciate beauty may be claimed to be of this higher order. Mere sensation or intellectual thought exercised upon sensuous experience, or upon any knowledge derived through the senses, would never furnish us with the sentiment or the idea of beauty. To recognise the beautiful, or

to know or feel what beauty means, implies in us the possession of an æsthetic sense or faculty.

So, again, in regard to duty or to moral worth. In spite of all that utilitarianism may attempt and pretend to accomplish in the way of deriving the moral from the useful, we need not hesitate to maintain that the real origin and ground of our ideas and feelings in regard to an ideal of virtue and obligation are to be found in an element in our psychical constitution which is not included in the faculties ordinarily designated sensation, feeling, intellect, or reason.

In like manner, the belief in a Supernatural Power and Authority above us, and beyond Nature and the world of men, and the belief in those relations to the spiritual and the supernatural which are acknowledged and expressed by us in worship, prayer, religious trust and loyalty, and communion with God, imply and rest upon elements in our spiritual constitution which are different from the faculties of intellect or thought, of sense, or feeling, and are of a higher and more intensely personal and vital order.

The manifestation of the presence and influence within us of these spiritual faculties may, perhaps, be appropriately described as faith, or as the impulses, convictions, and exercises of the religious instinct.

It is, of course, to be fully recognised, in reference to these religious elements in human nature, that, when they are described as powers or faculties of the soul, they are no more to be thought of as separate or separable parts of the soul, than are the faculties of intellect, of judgment, or of imagination. It is the soul, the whole soul, that possesses these characteristics and exercises these functions. The term faculty in this department of psychology means, just as it does in mental psychology, simply that there is acknowledged an element in our constitution which qualifies us for, and prompts us to, these specific operations and experiences.

The primitive naturalness of the sentiment of awe is early shown by the fear of the child who for the first time finds himself alone in the darkness of the night, or in the presence of death. In more mature experience, a similar expression of solemn awe is seen in connection with the mysterious gloom of the forest, or with the sudden devastations of physical storm or catastrophe. Nature-worship, zoolatry, and fetichism are all manifestations of the power of this element of our spiritual constitution.

The sense of wonder is very nearly allied to the sentiment of awe. The feeling excited by the contemplation of the starry heavens, or by the

observation of the phenomena of organic growth and change, may be mentioned as illustrations of the activity of this capability of our nature.

The appreciative admiration of the colours of a brilliant sunset, or of the graceful symmetry of a silver birch tree, are familiar cases which supply evidence of the existence of an æsthetic capacity in our spiritual nature.

And when we pass to the higher manifestations of these, the peculiarly spiritual parts of our psychical being, we find in men, in many forms and degrees, a passionate love and devotion to an ideal or an abstract conception, or to some practical aim, for which neither sensuous experience nor rational reflection can possibly afford the justification or the explanation. The power of the imagination in its higher reaches is, in fact, utterly inexplicable on the basis merely of the intellectual and rational powers of the soul.

Still more manifestly beyond their range and competence to explain, is the noble enthusiasm for goodness which enables men to do and dare in loyal devotion to their moral ideals, and to the cause of purity, of mercy, or of beneficence. The faith which has made men heroes in the interests of humanity and righteousness, and martyrs for their sake,—men of whom the world was not worthy,—and which fills every generous human

heart with loving and reverent admiration for those who have yielded themselves most unreservedly to its guidance and control;—this faith and its fruits cannot possibly be accounted for by the faculties and psychic elements ordinarily classified and examined in psychological discussions.

So, too, with the instinct of reverence and its expressions. It is, in short, by spiritual faculties that spiritual realities are discerned and appreciated. We feel the Divinity of Christ, and of the self-sacrificing love of which He is the embodiment, without reasoning upon it,—it is borne in upon our spiritual perceptions. Without the distinctively spiritual and religious elements of our nature, we could no more appreciate the noble and the Divine than swine could appreciate the pearls cast at their feet. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” Things hidden from the wise and prudent, from the intellectual as well as from the sordid and the secular, are revealed to babes. The vision of God is for the pure in heart, for those who listen in sincerity to the aspirations and the promptings of the highest principles of their nature. Without these principles and powers, reverence for and loyalty to the revealed beauty, sublimity, and glory of the Divine and eternal world would be as impossible for men as it is for the beasts of the field.

Whether we call it faith, or spiritual intuition, or religious instinct, or the sense of the infinite, or what we will,—we cannot refuse to own that in man, as man, there is a power of recognising and responding to things which the eye cannot see, nor the intellect discover;—an element in our constitution distinct from and superior to the powers by which we calculate and infer, as well as to those by which we are related to the material universe by which we are surrounded, and by which our bodily and animal life is sustained.

III.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THEISM.

RELIGIOUS ideas, feelings, and convictions, like all other elements of human knowledge and experience, are products of two factors or sets of factors. They are evolved in the consciousness of human beings, beings whose nature, attributes, faculties, capacities, and tendencies are what men's are, and who are surrounded by an environment of the particular type and character of that in which men find themselves. They are the outcome of the inter-play of self and not-self in the manifold mutual relations which subsist between them. "Every class of ideas emanating from the mind of man," says Edward Miall, "require, in order to their birth, the impregnation of the innate aptitudes and spontaneous tendencies of our nature by the suggestive activity of external existences."¹ They are what they are, not only because the external realities are what they are, but also because we are what we are ; if either was different, the resulting product would be different.

¹ "Bases of Belief," p. 96.

Plato, in his *Theætetus*, amply illustrated this doctrine, as taught by Pythagoras. "Colour," he says, "is neither in the object seen, nor in the eye that sees, but results from the application of the eye to the object, and so is the intermediate product of both." Our religious beliefs have taken the shape in which we find them, not solely because that which has been given as the crude material of experience has been of a certain character, but also because the faculties by which the manufactured products of religious faith, sentiment, and practice have been developed have been faculties of a particular order and quality.

The philosophy of intuition recognises the existence in human nature of innate impulses which lead to the affirmation of certain first principles which are fundamental to all our thinking and to all our interpretation of conscious experience. It is characteristic of all such intuitive affirmations that they neither require nor admit of proof. We believe them because we feel we cannot doubt them.

I. Of these intuitive principles, the first and most fundamental is the belief in power. The perception of phenomena, the recognition, that is, of changes in our conscious states, irresistibly suggests to human beings the idea of, and the

belief in the existence of, power or force which sustains to the changes experienced the relation to which we give the name of cause. Such changes are always construed by us as involving in their origin the exertion of power in order to their production. Mr. Herbert Spencer says, "the momentum of thought" leads us from the phenomena to the Prime Mover from whom they proceed.

It has, no doubt, been contended by some philosophical writers that causation is merely another name for invariable sequence. So far as that which is objectively and empirically given is concerned, it is true, we find nothing but sequence, one event or experience following another. We have no perception, no conscious experience of any nexus between successive phenomena, between the antecedent and the consequent, the cause and the effect. But the fact that in most, if not in all, languages, two distinct words or sets of words are found denoting respectively power and priority, is wholly inexplicable, except on the ground that there exist in the minds of men two distinct sets of ideas corresponding to the duality of terms employed.

It has been suggested by Locke, Reid, and others, that the origin of the idea of power or cause is to be traced to a supposed direct con-

sciousness of power in an act of volition. But all that we are really conscious of are successive states of desire, purpose, expectation, and, it may be, the outgoing of psychic energy, and then of the effect as a thing perceived. We perceive no nexus between the expenditure of volitional energy and the bodily movement of which we believe it to have been the cause. It is entirely owing to the laws and essential characteristics of human nature that we affirm the necessity of an efficient reason or cause of that which takes place in our experience, and that we refer to one or more of the temporal antecedents of any phenomena as the seat or the medium of their cause. Dr. Martineau says, "To witness phenomena and let them lie and dispose themselves in the mere order of time, space, and resemblance, is to us impossible. By the very make of our understanding we refer them to a Power which issues them."¹

II. The conviction that the course of Nature is uniform, upon which all inductive reasoning is founded, is another of our intuitive beliefs. We cannot assert that the idea that Nature might not be uniform is inconceivable or impossible. Our faith that Nature is uniform cannot be due to experience; since to establish it, with the certainty and generality with which we hold it, we

¹ "Modern Materialism," p. 51.

should require substantially a universal experience. Neither can it be resolved into a result of association, inasmuch as, like the animal instincts, it exists prior to repeated observation, and prior, therefore, to any opportunity for association or custom to come into operation, and produce what Hume described as "companion phenomena fused together." Dr. Bain says, "Our overweening tendency to anticipate the future from the past is shown prior to all association"; and he explains the principle of natural constancy as a uniformity imposed by the mind. It would, in fact, be almost impossible to know or interpret Nature at all if it were not a primitive faith that Nature is uniform and self-consistent. At any rate, the only science within our reach would be the knowledge of individual things.

A careful and candid analysis of our conviction of the constancy of Nature will satisfy us that it is an *à priori* faith, an intuition, in short, of the permanent unity which underlies, as their ground and reason, the manifold phenomena of the known universe. We have no means of testing or deciding by experience whether the force or forces of the universe which constitute the real efficient causes of phenomena experience increase, or diminution, or modification of any kind. Our conviction of the unchanging uni-

formity of sequence in natural phenomena, as well as of the existence of an efficient, universal, and permanent causal energy, is a postulate, a primitive intuition of our human nature.

III. The axiom that "harmony, method, and plan involve and betoken the presence of intelligence,"—the principle assumed in every recognition of purpose, whether in Nature or in the actions of men,—is due to an intuitive impulse of our spiritual nature. The observation of the facts of Nature, especially of organised bodies, calls up in us, as Dr. Whewell has said, "a persuasion that design has entered into the plan of animal form and development. If we bring in our mind this conception of design, nothing can more fully square and fit with it than the facts we encounter. But if we did not already possess an instinctive belief in design and purpose, it is doubtful whether in any case we should recognise contrivance in these facts. We cannot logically deduce design from the contemplation of organic structures, although it is impossible for us, constituted as we are, when the facts are clearly before us, not to find a reference to design operating in our minds. The idea of a purpose, supplied by our minds, is found to be applicable throughout the organic world. It is in virtue of this idea

that we conceive animals and plants as subject to disease, for disease takes place when the parts do not fully answer their purpose,—when they do not do what they ought.”¹ And as Dr. Flint says, “We have no more a direct perception or personal experience of the intelligence of our fellow-men than we have of the intelligence of God.”²

In the universe we intuitively recognise intelligence as involved in the relations subsisting between its several parts, both contemporary and successive. The relations of adaptation and of order, of contrivance and of plan, are regarded and cannot but be regarded by us as manifestations of intelligence. The organic world, at any rate, manifests to us, and for us, that which is a property of our own intelligent personality, the property, namely, of acting for ends. We interpret and construe phenomena and events as taking place with a view to the production in actuality and experience of that which had a previous existence as an idea possessed by some personal intelligence.

IV. In a similar way, we are impelled intuitively to recognise real or substantial existence, and to affirm that “every quality implies a

¹ “Philosophy of Discovery,” p. 369.

² “Theism,” p. 158.

substance to which it belongs." According to Berkeley, the *esse* of all things consists simply in their *percipi*; and according to John Stuart Mill, the term substance is an unmeaning one. But the almost universal testimony of mankind is that we have convictions, which we cannot but regard as valid, that beneath our changing states of consciousness there exists a permanent entity,—a self; that our fellow-men exist not merely as groups of our own sensations, but that in them, and constituting them, there is, as in ourselves, an unknown spiritual reality; and that behind those permanent clusters of sensations to which we give the name of the material universe, there exists a real, though utterly unknown, entity, which stands to those sensations in the relation of substance to attribute.

These convictions cannot have been arrived at by any process of logical inference; they are simply an instinctive demand for a basis, a substance in which the power, to which we are obliged to ascribe the sensations we experience, may be regarded as residing; and also a permanent basis for intelligence itself. We are so constituted that we cannot help having the conviction, but we can assign no *reason* for the faith we cherish.

V. In our recognition of personality there is involved what cannot but be claimed as another of the primitive beliefs of human nature. The phenomena of consciousness belong to the two great classes of knowing and willing. The belief in personality is the belief in a unit, a single substantial entity in which there is the alliance of power and intelligence. It is not one reality that we recognise as intelligent and another as causal; but the Ego that knows and wills is one and indivisible. Over and above the intuition of reality, as applied separatively to the manifestations of power and of intelligence of which we are immediately conscious, there is, it is maintained, the intuition of the inseparable alliance of these two modes of conscious experience in one and the same real existence. We have an instinctive conviction of the identity in real being of the intelligent principle and the volitional energy.

There is the same intuitive recognition of a unity of substance in reference to the power and the intelligence displayed by other beings; and in Nature, also, our intuition of personality unifies the unknown reality of power with the equally unknown basis of intelligence therein manifested.

Our faith in the existence of a Personal God, as the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, is

thus seen to be essentially the instinctive impulse of our nature.

VI. One of the most unquestionable elements supplied by the spiritual constitution of human nature is the conviction of the dependence of the finite self upon the Divine or Superhuman Person. Of this conviction, the instinct that prompts men everywhere to pray and worship is the clear and sufficient evidence. There is, as Dean Mansel has said, innate in our nature a conviction "that our life, natural and spiritual, is not in our own power, that there is One above us on whom we are dependent"; and this, as Professor Calderwood has said, "is one of the essential elements of the religious instinct." This sense of dependence is neither the product of experience, nor the conclusion of a process of logical inference; it is a primitive, instinctive conviction of our human nature.

VII. Another psychological factor, which plays an important part in the origination of our religious convictions, is the moral intuition,—the primitive impulse of our nature to interpret the moral law as the expression of the will of a Divine Lawgiver. Kant regarded this as the sole and sufficient basis of the phenomena of religion. In his view, religion is the recognition and discharge of duty as the will of God. He contended that a

law of obligation was unintelligible save as the expression of the will of a higher authority, of a Personal Being who possesses the right to claim our obedience. "Conscience," says Dr. Flint, "does not rule, nor pretend to rule, as an autocratic authority ; it unequivocally declares itself a delegated authority."¹ So, too, Cardinal Newman asserts that "this instinct of the mind, recognising an external master in the dictate of conscience, is parallel to that of the infant by which the presence of his mother or his nurse is discerned under the shifting shapes and colours of the visible world."² Dr. Martineau similarly urges that in the law of duty man owns "an authority which is so far from being of his setting up that his whole personality bows in homage before it,—an authority wholly different from mere power." "Authority expresses a relation between mind and mind, it is a purely personal attribute, a tie of dependence between the higher and the lower ; and wherever it is felt there are two minds present with each other in up-looking and up-lifting attitude."³

Many have tried, it is true, to sustain a theory of the derivation of the moral sense from non-moral sources ; but the actual process of the

¹ "Theism," p. 218.

² "Grammar of Assent," p. 107.

³ "Ethics and Religion," p. 18.

growth from the non-moral to the moral has never been explained ; and the attempt thus to account for the sense of obligation on utilitarian principles cannot but be regarded as palpably inadequate.

We intuitively apprehend a moral ideal of human life and character ; and in the obligatoriness of the ideal we intuitively recognise the will of a Person whose authority has imposed that ideal upon us.

These psychological principles and instinctive affirmations constitute the subjective factor in the formation and development of our theistic faith and religious convictions. Our spiritual nature, in short, is such that it finds, and cannot but find, a spiritual significance in the phenomena of physical nature, and in the facts of human experience and history ; it inevitably construes them as revealing to us the manifestations of the power and intelligence of a Divine Person. We are compelled by "the very make of our being" to refer every phenomenon to some cause in explanation of its origin. Our natural conviction of the uniformity and constancy of Nature's laws, carries with it the faith in the unchanging identity of the power from whose manifestations those laws are generalised, and so we refer the whole of that which is to a great All-powerful First Cause. In the harmony,

and intelligible rational order of the universe, we are obliged to recognise the tokens of the existence and activity of intelligence ; and, in like manner, we cannot help but assume the existence of some real entity as the basis or seat alike of power and intelligence. And then, as the power is manifestly guided by intelligence, and the intelligence revealed in the operations of the power, we intuitively refer the two attributes to one and the same real Being, a Supernatural Person. And finally, the sense of dependence, and that of moral obligation, naturally, and almost inevitably, attach themselves to the Supernatural Person whom we are thus led to recognise as the great First Cause of all things.

IV.

THE MEDIA OF REVELATION.

PASSING from the subjective to the objective factor in the origination of our religious faiths and ideas, it is convenient to adopt the term "Revelation" as denoting the entire range of facts and events in which the relations subsisting between the Divine Being and ourselves appear to be embodied and represented. The word itself means simply the manifestation of that which was hidden or unknown; the notions both of *φανέρωσις*, bringing to view, and *ἀποκάλυψις*, unveiling, being included under it.

Just as the inner world of human personality is continually being disclosed by word and deed, look and gesture, so the character, wishes, and purposes of God are believed to be revealed in the works of Nature, and in the ordering of the events of human history.

The possibility of any such manifestation to us, or recognition by us of the Divine, has, of course been doubted or denied by some. Lessing and others have tried to show that any belief in a

supernatural revelation is simply the offspring of self-deception or ignorant superstition. But by overwhelming majorities men have affirmed the conviction that not only is Divine revelation possible, but that men are competent to recognise it as such, and to be fully assured of its supernatural character and origin. "God is manifested by His works," said Aristotle. Similarly Cicero declared, "Thou seest not God, and yet thou knowest Him from His works." "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen," said Paul, "being understood by the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity."

Divine revelation pre-supposes two necessary conditions ; first, the existence of God as a Personal Being ; and second, the real existence of finite personal beings to whom the revelation is made.

Atheism, a theory of the world which acknowledges merely a blind, mechanical fate, or a doctrine which denies intelligent personality in the supernatural, precludes the idea of revelation. So, too, pantheistic conceptions which suppress or ignore any real distinction between the Divine and the human, render it impossible and inconceivable. But granting the postulates of the personality of God, and the finite personality of the

human soul, it would seem little less than absurd to question the possibility of supernatural revelation, and to suppose that "He who endowed man with his powers of self-revelation should be Himself helplessly imprisoned in everlasting silence."

The several methods of Divine revelation which are conceivable, and on behalf of which the characters of naturalness and probability may be claimed, may be classified under a threefold division:—1st, Immediate, 2nd, Reflective, and 3rd, Mediate Revelation.

By immediate revelation is meant the direct communication of Divine truth by God to the individual soul, whether the apprehension of that which is revealed is regarded as the result chiefly of an act of disclosure on the part of God, or chiefly of a Divine quickening of the faculties of men, qualifying them to discern that which was always present, though ordinarily unrecognised. Such immediate revelation is not easily discriminated from Divine inspiration, and need not be separately considered.

By reflective revelation is denoted the apprehension of supernatural truth and reality which is due to the application of the faculties which men possess to the works and ways of God in the worlds of nature and of history. The truth is derived and deduced by processes of prolonged

observation, investigation, and inference. Of this reflective revelation there may be specified three chief varieties, according as the conceptions of the Divine are extracted from the physical universe, from human nature, or from human history respectively.

By mediate revelation we may denote the communication of ideas, facts, or truths through the *media* of symbolic phenomena in which these thoughts and truths find intelligible and appropriate expression. Such revelation may be distinguished as imparted to us through visions addressed to the mind and heart through the sense of sight ; as communicated in actions and works regarded as performed for the express purpose of indicating the thoughts, feelings, and purposes of God ; as conveyed to us in words, spoken or written ; and as given in the character and life of a Divine Person manifested in human nature and conditions.

Mediate revelation evidently assumes what may be described as miraculous characteristics, consisting, as it does, in words, actions, and events which, to faith, possess a special significance as originating in a definite purpose on the part of God to reveal His mind and will by their instrumentality. The phenomena are regarded by us as having been called into existence with the distinct aim and purpose of communicating Divine truth.

Reflective revelation rests upon facts in which the truth is conveyed indirectly, and, as it were, incidentally, and from which our reflective faculties derive and infer it. It is often described as natural revelation, whilst mediate revelation is not inappropriately distinguished as special or miraculous.

I. *Natural Revelation*.—Being what we are, we cannot but read the phenomena of physical nature as telling us of the power, the intelligence, the unity of the Supernatural Being, of whom and through whom and by whom we believe that they are. Oftentimes, too, we encounter facts and events which seem to go a long way towards warranting our faith in the beneficence, and, it may be, in the righteousness of the great Power to whom we are constrained to ascribe them.

In human nature, in particular, as one of the works of the Divine Being, we cannot but recognise some manifestation of the Divine ideas and purposes. Alike in intellect, in heart, and in conscience, we may read something of what God desires us to think and believe about Himself. The conscience especially seems to speak to us as distinctly charged to convey to us the will and purpose of God concerning us. "When I consider," says Thomas Erskine, "what is going on in my conscience, the chief thing forced upon my

notice is that I find myself face to face with a purpose not my own, for I am often conscious of resisting it. This consciousness of a purpose concerning me that I should be a good man—right, true, and unselfish—is the first firm footing that I have in the region of religious thought, for I cannot dissociate the idea of a purpose from that of a purposer, and I cannot but identify this purposer with the Author of my being, and the Being of all beings.”¹

This doctrine, that God has revealed Himself to us through the constitution of our own nature, is no doubt liable to exaggeration and perversion in an excessive anthropomorphism; but, within proper limits, it can scarcely be denied that it holds good—that in what He has made us, God has given us some indications as to what He wishes us to think concerning His own relations to us, and concerning the attributes of His nature as displayed towards us. It may fairly be claimed that in the instincts and affections of Fatherhood, for instance, we have the fullest and clearest revelation of the relation in which God desires us to regard Himself as standing to us His creatures. At any rate, it cannot be doubted that “if we recognise a Cause of the universe at all, we must suppose its Author, at least, capable of apprehending and responding to

¹ “Spiritual Order,” p. 47.

the highest characters manifested in it, and therefore capable of apprehending and responding to trust and love such as those which arise out of the fatherly relation, which is the highest and noblest which we have presented in our personal experience."¹

The science of religion gives its testimony to the wide prevalence of conceptions of the Divine Being which have been largely derived from the recognition of the pre-eminence of those human relations as a faint reflection of the relationship which God sustains to us. The early Aryans with their Dyaus-pitar, and the Scandinavians with their Supreme Divinity, All-father, may be taken as illustrating the distinct acceptance of the light and guidance of this form of Divine revelation. But in all mythology, anthropomorphism, which consists essentially in reliance, it may be too unqualified reliance, upon ideas of the Divine Nature gathered from human attributes, has been one of the most influential elements and factors.

It is, indeed, both natural and inevitable that men should recognise in the attributes and characteristics of human nature the fairest and clearest symbols of the character of God.

In human history, again, it is at times impossible for us to resist the conviction that we

¹ Herbert's "Modern Realism," p. 440.

may discern the voice of God speaking to us and disclosing something of the Divine plan and ideal concerning men and nations. The revelation thus given is, no doubt, peculiarly liable to misinterpretation, in consequence of the difficulty of determining how far the purposes of the Divine Ruler are frustrated or modified by the operation of human freedom and human depravity. Manichæism or Dualism, such as found expression in the system of Zoroaster, might, in fact, seem to be the most logical deduction from the facts of history taken by themselves. At any rate, in so far as freedom is ascribed to men, a strict and complete philosophy of history would appear to be an impossibility. At any particular stage, moreover, in the long process of the evolution of the ultimate issues of human progress, the actual is only significant to us when we have by some means or other gained a conception, more or less definite, of the ideal which is the final goal of the historical development. We cannot, that is to say, precisely and certainly determine from the observation of successive events whether *what is* is in harmony with God's plan and intention, or in opposition thereto, in consequence of the perverted and rebellious action of human freedom. History, it has often been said, is God teaching by examples ; but this is true, for the most part,

only when we have an unmistakable indication of the truths and lessons which the examples are intended to illustrate and enforce. Without it, we are liable, in the tumult of the world's history, to "confound God's voice with the voices of men," and to misconstrue the Divine purpose which we are compelled to recognise as overruling the affairs and actions of men.

II. *Special Revelation*. — Mediate or special revelation is distinguished from the general revelation which is given in nature and in history, in that it involves the possibility and reality of acts of Divine self-manifestation of an extraordinary or miraculous character.

Deists, Rationalists, Positivists, and Naturalists reject the idea of such special revelation; but from the standpoint of Christian theism there is no difficulty in recognising a revelation of the Divine through any adequate media, or in acknowledging that God might or did make use of such media for the impartation to men of the ideas and truths concerning Himself which He wished them to understand. As Nitzsch has said, "Revelation (of the special sort) obtains its proper place only in the Divine plan of redemption." Those who do not adopt the Christian position as to the necessity of redemption, are not likely to acknowledge the indispensability of special

revelation. It is the conception of man as a sinner that produces and warrants the conviction that he needs not merely the confirmation of the truths and facts suggested to his natural faculties by the general revelation of the Divine, but also a higher revelation of the possibility and method of salvation from sin.

The objection to mediate revelation upon which, in the present day, the chief stress is laid, seems to be virtually the unchangeableness of God. It is urged that to admit a special revelation is to declare the defectiveness of the general revelation. But if the reality of sin, as a wilful deviation by men from the original plan and purpose of God concerning them, be admitted, the special revelation imparted in words or visions, or in miraculous operations, or through a Divine incarnation, falls to be regarded as a consequence of the new conditions into which men have been brought by their sin.

If the impossibility of miracle had been established and were accepted, then, of course, there could be no revelation of this special character; but, granting the possibility of the miraculous, the possibility of special or mediate revelation cannot be denied.

The media which it is conceivable that God

might employ in the special revelation of His purposes concerning men as sinners in need of salvation,—and which, as a matter of fact, it has very widely been believed that God actually has made use of,—may be grouped, as has been suggested, under the four heads—(1) Visions, (2) Words, (3) Special Acts and Events, (4) A Personal Incarnation. None of these media can be regarded as *à priori* impossible instrumentalities whereby God might communicate to men His thought and will.

1. Visions as a means of Divine revelation form, perhaps, the medium which is most liable to suspicion and distrust, on account of the well-known possibility of optical illusion in various forms. The objective reality of any supposed appearance would seem to need verification by appeal to the confirmatory testimony of other senses or of other spectators. And yet, on *à priori* grounds, it is no more incredible that God should reveal His mind and will to men through the sense of sight than through any other channel. And, for the conviction of those to whom the revelation is made, the phenomenon, for instance, of a man's hand seen writing on a palace wall might be as reliable and sufficient as a voice supposed to be heard speaking from heaven. So, moreover, it is possible that the visions which

present themselves to the mind in the dreams of the night might make as deep and irresistible an impression as any abnormal appearance in waking hours could do. There is, at any rate, no *primâ facie* warrant for us to refuse to own that God may have revealed truth and duty to Jacob, to Pharoah, to Balaam, or to Belshazzar, to Joseph, to Peter, to Cornelius, or to Paul, whether in the dreams of sleep or in preternatural appearances by day.

2. In many respects, words spoken or written would appear to be the most natural medium by which God might be expected to communicate with men. Spoken words might, of course, be repeated by those who first heard them, and so be promulgated and transmitted to succeeding generations. But if reduced to writing, the Divine messages would be more accurately and persistently preserved. In fact, a written form of revelation would seem to be, as Henry Rogers has said, "in strict analogy with the law by which God has made writing an indispensable instrument of all human progress. Upon books the collective education of the race depends. They are the sole instrument for registering, perpetuating, and transmitting thought. Without this instrument, the progress of the individual is inconceivably slow, and with him, for the most

part, it terminates.”¹ Whether, as a matter of fact, God ever did make use of audible words to impart to men the truth and duty He desired that they should accept, is a question of evidence and testimony, but there can be no *à priori* difficulty in admitting it as possible that the law was proclaimed at Mount Sinai by a voice out of the clouds, or that at the baptism of Jesus the words were heard, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

3. Revelation may also be given, it is claimed, through the medium of actions and works regarded as intentional indications of the thoughts, feelings, and purposes of God. Christ’s miraculous deeds were significant, disclosing something of the purpose as well as of the spirit of His life’s mission and work. In most cases, they are parables as well as miracles.

Closely allied to the miraculous are those events of personal or national history to which the name “special providences” has been given. The events and coincidences denoted by that term stand to the ordinary incidents of human history in very much the same relation as that in which miracles stand to the regular operations of Divine energy and volition. God is pleased to work for the most part, both in nature and

¹ “Eclipse of Faith,” p. 261.

in history, by constant perennial methods ; if at times He seems to us to depart from these methods, we describe His unusual and more definitely significant acts as miracles in the one case, and as special providences in the other case. In each it is the apparently extraordinary character of the occurrence in the circumstances that compels the recognition of the presence of a supernatural agency, and of a distinct and definite purpose in the particular event. The possibility of the recognition of any precise boundaries between the ordinary and the extraordinary will fall to be considered in connection with the subject of miracles. For the present it is sufficient to note that events have occurred which appeared to those who witnessed them to be so extraordinary that they were inexplicable by reference to any causes then known, or by classification with any similar phenomena. And in respect to the manifestations of the over-rulings of Providence in the affairs of men, men have been convinced, again and again, that things have come about in a way that appeared so strange and inexplicable that it was felt that they could not be accounted for save by reference to the supernatural interposition of Divine Power. Now, whenever, and in whatever measure, special providences are recognised as actual occurrences,

we have, in some degree, a revelation of the thought, and character, and purpose of God.

Martensen says: "It cannot escape the notice of the careful observer that wonderful coincidences often occur which to reason may appear only as an extraordinary chance,—combinations which lie beyond the range of rational computation, and which, like genii, scorn the narrow laws of human knowledge,—but in which the Christian discerns the finger of God." "When we speak of the finger of God in the lives of individuals or of the race, our meaning is that the combination of circumstances necessary to a certain turning-point in human history, or by which some epoch is begun or terminated, is brought about, not by these circumstances themselves, but by an overruling will manifesting itself in the course of events. We cannot distinguish between sacred history and the perfect miracle; it is a miracle, for it not only reveals the creative agency of providence in general, but in its special workings,—those special workings whose object is to establish the true belief in Providence among men; and it unfolds itself in a series of acts which serve as 'signs and wonders,' that is, as witnesses that the God of history and of conscience is Lord also of Nature's laws."¹

¹ "Dogmatics," p. 220.

4. A person, a character, a life may be evidence of the existence and agency of that which cannot be brought under the ordinary laws of nature and human life, and may therefore be to us evidence of the superhuman and the supernatural. In the case, for instance, of the Person in whom, as Christians, we recognise the unique manifestation of the Divine Being, men have been convinced that His character was morally perfect, and so extraordinary and marvellous as to reveal the peculiar presence and agency of Divine Power. They have been constrained to own that the contrast between His teaching and that of all mere human teachers can only be explained by supposing that His wisdom was above that of man; and that His personal influence upon men, and upon the course of the world's history, has been truly miraculous. Few who believe in a Personal God will hesitate to acknowledge that in humanity some reflection of the eternal may be discerned. Then what difficulty need be felt in believing also that God might select some individual person, life, and history, through which to give the clearest and completest expression of His own character and purposes? In fact, the essential ideas of morals and religion can only be adequately expressed and represented in that way—"dramatised, as it were, in connection with

actual scenes and incidents." "God hath," we may well believe, "shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

The study of the religions of the world shows that men have universally felt the need of a personal revealer and mediator between God and themselves. They have shown this in the myths and legends they have constructed, in the ideals they have framed, and in the heroes they have worshipped. Plato affirmed the need of some Divine messenger to declare the actual truth concerning the gods. Buddhists recognise in Gautama, the enlightened one who was enabled to proclaim the truth by which his disciples are delivered from the bondage of ignorance and misery. Hinduism recognises in the many incarnations of Brahma and of Vishnu, the necessity for the manifestation of God in human personality for the enlightenment and salvation of men. And Christians believe that in the person, character, and life of Christ, they have the incarnate Word of God,—“the effulgence of His glory, the very image of His substance.”

In the words of Dr. Flint: “The highest form of special revelation—the revelation which rests on all other revelation, and in which all other revelation is completed—the revelation which is

the consummation of the whole process of the Divine self-manifestation, and which brings with it the realisation of all that religion implies—is, according to Christianity, revelation through a human person, possessed of all human virtues and graces, and exhibiting in human conditions, in human action, and in human suffering, the Divine love and sympathy. It is impossible even to imagine, how in the domain of religion, there can be anything higher or more perfect. It completes revelation. It founds the perfect religion. ‘Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid.’”¹

¹ “Faiths of the World,” p. 429.

V.

MEANING OF THE MIRACULOUS.

CONSIDERED as a phenomenon, a miracle is simply an extraordinary occurrence. We call that miraculous for which we can find no analogy in that which has previously been known to have happened. It is a wonder—something contrary to a wide induction of the experienced order of phenomena. Our reference of the event to some supernatural or superhuman force or power as its cause or explanation is entirely a matter of our own subjective interpretation. As the result of our reflection upon it, we may come to recognise in it a sign of the special and immediate presence, power, and agency of God.

That which we call miraculous is, of course, an effect whose true and efficient cause is to be found only in the Divine Will. But this is true of all other phenomena, with the exception, it may be claimed, of the actions of free agents. All natural forces, at any rate, are manifestations of Divine energy. But in the ordinary course of events that Divine energy operates in accordance with certain

definite and permanent rules or methods. In miraculous events that energy seems to operate in an irregular way. It seems to do so—that is all we can say—for, for anything we can tell, that which is absolutely unique so far as our own experience goes, might prove in a universal experience to be simply the regular and appropriate manifestation of some higher or remoter force permanently present, but generally restrained or masked by the action of other forms of Divine energy.

In the New Testament we find several words employed to designate the phenomena to which we are in the habit of applying the term miraculous—*τέρατα* (wonders), *σημεῖα* (signs), *ἔργα* (works), and *δυνάμεις* (powers). As an objective phenomenon, a miracle is a *τέρας*, a very unusual event. The intrinsic character of the event, the circumstances in which it takes place, and the purpose for which it seems to take place, may be such that in our eyes the occurrence assumes the character of a *σημεῖον*. It may be so presented to us as to appear to us as an unmistakable manifestation of a supernatural *δύναμις*.

Various theories have been advanced by apolo-
gists and others with a view to remove or lessen the apparent incompatibility of miracles with the conception of the rigid uniformity and constancy

of Nature upon which modern science is, to so large an extent, disposed to insist. Canon Mozley, for instance, contends that inasmuch as our belief in the constancy of Nature is not founded upon reason or experience, but is simply an intuitive conviction, that belief affords no valid ground of objection to the acceptance of miracles as historical facts. But the ascription of that belief to an intuitive parentage does not, in any degree, render its repugnance to a miracle less formidable or less definite. As the extraordinary, the miraculous stands opposed to our experience of the general regularity of phenomena in the past, as well as to our instinctive anticipation that this regularity will be maintained everywhere and always. A miracle is a deviation—a breaking off from the observed custom of the past; and it is a disappointment of our intuitive expectation of uniformity in regard to the future.

Other writers have suggested that miracles may be the perfectly regular manifestations of forces of a higher order which only occasionally find the conditions necessary for their effective operation. But, as Prebendary Row has said, "We are only encumbering the question with needless difficulties when we introduce into our conception of a miracle some theory as to the mode of the Divine action in its performance. It is clear that there is not

the smallest necessity to affirm that the performance of one must involve either a directly creative act of God, or a violation or a suspension of the action of any law or force in Nature. I do not say that such may not have been the mode of the Divine working, but that it is wholly unnecessary to assert that it must have been."¹ All that we need to say, or are warranted in saying, is that a miracle is an unusual, irregular manifestation of the Divine energy, which impresses us with the conviction that it was manifested for some distinct moral or spiritual purpose. Dr. Carpenter well says: "The scientific Theist, who regards the so-called laws of Nature as nothing else than man's expression of so much of the Divine order as it lies within his power to discover, and who looks at the uninterruptedness of this order as the highest evidence of its perfection, need find no abstract difficulty in the conception that the Author of Nature can, if He will, occasionally depart from it. The question with me, therefore, is simply, have we any adequate historical ground for the belief that such departure ever has taken place?"²

We know nothing as to the nature or the number of the forces which are at work in and

¹ "Bampton Lectures," p. 67.

² "Contemporary Review," Jan. 1876.

behind what we call the natural world. We can no more say that the voice heard speaking from heaven at the baptism of Jesus Christ was beyond or contrary to Nature, than our grandfathers could have truthfully said that it was beyond or contrary to Nature to produce a photographic picture of the bones in a living man's body, or of the coins in a purse which we could not open. All we can say that a miracle is, or pretends to be, is that it is an extraordinary, a very unusual departure from the regular and otherwise apparently uniform method upon which the forces of Nature operate. And to those who believe in a God as the source and ground of what we call the forces of Nature, that means that a miracle is simply an unusual variation in the method of the Divine activity. It is, of course, by the power and will of God that every stone falls to the ground, that the magnet turns to the north, or that the sunshine makes the leaf green and the orange yellow. If He has chosen, on any particular occasions, to make iron float upon water, or water suddenly to become wine, or prison bolts spontaneously to fly back,—these, no doubt, are unusual, extraordinary, and as we, from our point of view, might say, irregular manifestations of His power, but that is all we can say in the matter. They appear to us as miracles, as wonders, as things out of the common

order and sequence—not according to God's usual method.

The attempt to explain the compatibility of miracles with the order of Nature has been made chiefly because certain men of science have so unwarrantably insisted upon the rigid uniformity and constancy of natural law, as if the laws and methods generally followed in the phenomena of Nature were a "must-be," a cast-iron system by which the Divine activity itself was helplessly bound and crippled. Indeed, to say that a miracle is impossible, is really to say that God Himself is not a free agent. It is to set up Nature as a kind of Tower of Babel in defiance of the power and will of a personal and living God. The opponents of the miraculous maintain that the Divine activity is limited to the forces and methods by which His power is ordinarily manifested in the physical universe. They have affirmed not only that God never does, but that He cannot act otherwise than through the laws of Nature. The Divine immanence in Nature is, in their view, not a matter of choice, but of necessity. Theodore Parker, for instance, said, "The laws of Nature represent the modes of action of God Himself," and are the only possible modes in which He can act. But what warrant can there be for such a doctrine of the relation of God to the universe?

God, we believe, is in nature, but He is also above and beyond nature. Nature is His product, not His prison. We claim that the normal, healthy impulse of the soul prompts to the belief that God is free; and if God is free, the Maker and the Master of Nature, then miracles cannot be impossible.

The only question is, Have we sufficient evidence that miracles have happened? Are we warranted in supposing that God ever has deviated from the methods of action which He usually pursues in carrying on the universe that He has created? This much, at any rate, cannot be denied, that we have remarkably good and strong historical evidence that some very wonderful, extraordinary, irregular things have occurred.

The resurrection of the dead, for instance, is an extraordinary event; and yet for the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have as reliable evidence as we have for almost any historical event of bygone years. Now, without attempting in any way to account for or explain, by giving the cause of that professedly historical event,—whether it was brought about by the immediate action of the Divine free-agency, or by the operation of some rare, and to us unknown, spiritual power always present in the universe and in human nature, or by some mysterious force always present

behind the world of nature, but under ordinary circumstances prevented from manifesting itself,—however we might be disposed to try to explain it, we cannot refuse to describe such an event as extraordinary, wonderful, in short, as miraculous. Even John Stuart Mill frankly admitted that the belief in the miraculous interposition of God is perfectly rational, and that it is a question of evidence and not of *à priori* theory. If, in the beginning, God created the world in the full sense of bringing into existence something which did not previously exist, that, at any rate, was a miracle in the fullest sense of the word.

If, again, sin be the act of a free agent whom God has endowed with the power of originating something not in harmony with His own plan and purpose, sin is something irregular and extraordinary. The human life of Christ, moreover, if He be recognised as a sinless being in human nature, is similarly miraculous.

It is a further question, How many of the wonderful events commonly recognised as miracles are to be claimed as having been brought about by the immediate agency of God? Whether, for instance, Christ's miracles of healing were accomplished by the spiritual power of a perfectly pure and loving Being,

such as He was, a power which may, perhaps, be natural to such a Being; whether the opening of Peter's prison may not have been what we might describe as the natural result of the direct spiritual power over matter exerted by the prayers of his friends; or whether, in each case, the event is to be ascribed to the direct action of the Divine Will,—may fairly be left as open questions. Even, as has been suggested, the resurrection of Christ may be regarded as due, not to any positive intervention of God in any way that could be described as irregular or unnatural, but as being due simply to the ordinary and universal power of that full and perfect spiritual life, the life of absolute goodness and uninterrupted communion with God which He possessed,—even that may be held an open question. We are told that it was not possible that He should be holden by the bonds of death and the grave.

But if we are satisfied that God can work miracles, can directly intervene in the ordinary course of events, can act in a way which is not according to His usual method of procedure,—then it is simply a matter for faith and spiritual perception to interpret this or that extraordinary event which we feel warranted in believing has actually taken place in one way or in another.

If God did what He had never done before when He called the universe into being; if He acted as He had never acted before when He sent His Son into the world, born of a woman,—then there is little difficulty in supposing that some, if not all, the wonderful things that Jesus did during His earthly life were done by a direct and unusual operation of Divine power. The idea of a system of rigid, unbreakable laws of Nature which God Himself cannot set aside, is nothing better than a myth and a bogey which men have impiously conjured up, and by which they imagine that they can oust God from His own universe.

In his *Bampton Lectures*, Prebendary Row contends that moral miracles should take the place of prominence which has hitherto been assigned to physical miracles. The moral miracles are the character and life of Christ Himself, and the effects produced in the history of the world by His life and teaching. But it is not so obvious how or where the superior verifiableness, which Row claims for the latter, can be made good. It is by no means so easy, as he seems to assume, to establish the super-human character of the life and works and influence of Jesus Christ; it is, indeed, almost impossible to present the argument in such a

form of logical cogency as shall constrain an unbeliever to own that such a life never has been lived, and never could have been lived, nor such an influence be exerted and such effects be produced by one who was merely man.

A more fundamental problem needs, moreover, to be considered, namely, What is the proper function of the miraculous? Mozley has said that the traditional view of the function of miracles is that they were meant to be the guarantee and voucher of Divine revelation. The modern and truer view is that which has been set forth by Dr. Bruce and others,—according to which they are regarded, not as signs annexed to revelation for evidential purposes, but as constitutive elements of revelation, as forming, in fact, the very essence of revelation. “Christ’s miracles were,” Dr. Bruce says, “a part of His ministry, and He appealed to them, not as something external added to His work as a seal, but as an integral part of the work, the evidence of which was as really internal as that of His teaching, which, by its intrinsic wisdom and grace, came home to men’s minds with persuasive force and moral authority.”¹ Miracles seem to be virtually involved in a revelation of grace made to men by acts of condescension, acts revealing a special purpose of gracious help and

¹ “Chief End of Revelation,” p. 169.

deliverance, culminating in a Divine incarnation. Especially as part of a Divine revelation given to creatures blinded and perverted by sin, are miracles apparently essential. As Dr. Bruce says: "The sin which creates the necessity for a revelation of grace, also makes the recipient of revelation indisposed to believe that the Divine thoughts towards him are thoughts of peace, and slow to understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. An evil conscience is sceptical concerning the Divine benignity. There is an antecedent distrust which needs to be subdued by a special display of love,"¹ such as that which we have in the miracles of Christ.

Christianity, as a revelation of Divine grace and mercy, and of a Divine power and process of human redemption, is supernatural and extraordinary from first to last. It is not a case of kernel of abstract, ideal truth, and husk of professedly miraculous history; the religion of the Bible is supernatural, abnormal, and what we call miraculous in its essence, and in all its development,—a miraculous incarnation, a supernatural redemptive energy, a Divine triumph over sin and death,—these are its vital elements; and it is only to be expected that they shall be accompanied and approved by signs and wonders of a miraculous sort.

¹ "Chief End of Revelation," pp. 177-8.

In short, to those who accept Christianity as a religion of redemption, the miracles that Christ performed, and the miracle of His Resurrection from the dead, so far from presenting any difficulty, fall naturally into place as incidents of a miraculous, historical interposition on behalf of a being who by his sin had placed himself in an abnormal position, a position from which we cannot but believe that deliverance could only come by an abnormal exercise and manifestation of Divine love and power.

VI.

THE NATURE OF INSPIRATION.

A BELIEF in Divine inspiration has been almost universal amongst the nations of the world. Even the most ignorant and barbarous tribes have believed in a direct action of the supernatural upon human nature in the shape, at least, of frenzy, ecstasy, or possession. And among peoples at a higher level of culture, inspiration, as embodied in their sacred Scriptures, has been recognised, and has assumed a correspondingly higher character. For Vedic Hymns and Buddhist Pitakas, for the Liturgies of the Zend-Avesta, the Eddas of the Scandinavians, and the Suras of the Koran, it has been claimed that they were Divinely communicated to their respective authors.

The Christian Scriptures have been regarded almost unanimously by the different sections of the Church as the production of men who were influenced and enlightened by the Spirit of God. And by considerable numbers of Christian people at different times a similar influence and illumination have been claimed, in varying degrees, on

behalf of all pious believers. The Mystics in the Middle Ages and the Society of Friends in modern times have, in particular, been advocates and exponents of this wider view of the operation of the Divine Spirit on the minds of men.

Almost all Christians agree in recognising not only the possibility, but the actuality of an immediate Divine influence upon the souls of men. There is not, however, by any means the same unanimity in support of the idea that by such Divine influence truths or facts, unknown before, have ever been brought, at any rate since the completion of the Canonical Scriptures, within the range of the cognitive consciousness of men. And yet it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, either, on the one hand, to assign reasons for believing that such Divine influence was exerted in the case of the apostles and evangelists, but never in subsequent years; or, on the other hand, to produce conclusive proof that, as a matter of fact, spiritual and religious truth has never been thus imparted to the minds of men whether before or since the end of the first century.

There are two methods which may be distinguished from each other, by which it may at least be conceived that Divine truth has been communicated directly to the individual soul—

1st, by spiritual illumination ; and 2nd, by an abnormal quickening of human faculties. Inspiration, which has been described by Dr. Sanday as "a direct objective action of the Divine upon the human," may properly be regarded as comprehending both these modes of Divine operation.

In recent years, the unique inspiration claimed for the writers of the Scriptures has been made the subject of renewed and more careful thought and investigation, with the result that it has come to be more and more generally recognised that the Holy Spirit's illumination and guidance granted to them are in some measure shared by all the sincere and loyal disciples of Christ. There is, in fact, no reason whatever to regard any of the functions or operations of the Divine Spirit as having been restricted to the apostles or the writers of the Scriptures. Such certainly does not seem to have been the teaching of Christ Himself in the matter. "I have yet," He said, "many things to say unto you ; but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth. He shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify Me ; for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you." It may without hesitation be affirmed that this promise

has been, and is constantly being fulfilled, and that the Holy Spirit is still with men, to illuminate their minds, and to bring to them higher and yet higher conceptions of Divine and spiritual things.

When the Old Testament prophets declared, "Thus saith the Lord," it cannot be questioned that they themselves felt sure that they had received a message directly impressed upon them by God. The Apostle Paul, with somewhat less, perhaps, of assured confidence said, "And I think that I also have the Spirit of God." Both apostles and prophets evidently believed that it was by the influence and enlightenment of the Divine Spirit that certain ideas and convictions had been presented to their minds.

It would, indeed, be absurd to suppose that the Divine Spirit, by whom our spirits at first were formed, and by whom they are continually sustained, could not come into immediate contact with those spirits, and awaken thoughts, and aspirations, and assurances within them which otherwise they might never have apprehended. For the most part, no doubt, the Spirit's teaching and guidance are given in connection with intelligent meditation upon the facts and phenomena of nature, history, and experience. This was, in all probability, the case with the inspired writers of

the Scriptures, as well as with Christians generally in subsequent times. The Epistles, for example, contain the interpretation put upon the facts of the life of Christ by men whom we may fairly regard as having enjoyed an especial measure of the Spirit's guidance. The historical events became the vehicle of Divine revelation to their spiritual perceptions; and, in so far as they were inspired men, they were guided in their reading of the spiritual meaning of the events by the Holy Spirit of God. The inspiration that was granted to them was essentially the same illumining, quickening, and purifying work of the Divine Spirit as that which is enjoyed by all who, in every age, are led, and taught, and strengthened by that Spirit.

That by which the biblical writers are specially distinguished is their unique position, a position of peculiar privilege and advantage. Their religious nature and their spiritual insight had, doubtless, been wonderfully stimulated and elevated by their personal intercourse with the Son of God, or by other special circumstances in which by Divine Providence they had been placed; as well as by the impartation, as we may reasonably believe, of unusual measures of the influence and teaching of the Holy Spirit. It was because of their own consciousness that they were thus guided and helped by the Spirit of God in their interpretation

of facts, in their apprehension of spiritual truths and in the hopes and aspirations they cherished, that they were so firmly persuaded that the truths and doctrines they proclaimed were indeed a revelation from God.

Canon Farrar says: "The inspiration of the Scriptures was only miraculous as any communication must be miraculous whereby the finite is enabled to comprehend the teaching and will of the infinite. We believe that in the Scriptures we have the will and message of God, the unfolding of the purposes of God as they were made manifest by the light of His Spirit to the minds of the messengers He selected; but that those messages were not, for the most part, revealed by openings of the heavens and unearthly noises in the air, but by spiritual agencies analogous to, though far intenser than, those whereby, in all ages, God has inspired and illuminated the hearts of men."¹

The position taken by Dr. Ladd is very similar. He says: "There is not any portion of the Scriptures written under such Divine impulse or influence as may not belong to other members of the community of believers in the same era. There is no evidence of any peculiar kind or degree of inspiration which is imparted to the

¹ Bible Educator," art. "Inspiration."

authors simply *ad scribendum* or *in scribendo*. They contain in written form those ethico-religious ideas and truths which the Divine Spirit has revealed through the selected and inspired souls who were the authors of the writings." "None of the truth which is given to us in the Bible presents itself as authentic and infallible merely on the ground of its presence in the Bible. The Bible neither authenticates nor imparts authority to its contents." "The idea and fact of inspiration do not include either the idea or the fact of infallibility." "Revelation and inspiration belong to the entire religious community; in specific kind, though by no means in degree or result, they are the same for all members of the community."¹

Most of the difficulties and perplexities which have been felt in respect to the inspiration of the Scriptures are due to the fact that inspiration has so generally been supposed to carry with it an infallible authoritativeness, to which all who read the inspired writings must implicitly submit themselves. The fact is, however, that moral and spiritual truths can only be recognised as really authoritative when men feel themselves constrained to judge that they are true and right. It is by our own spiritual faculties that spiritual

¹ "Doctrine of Sacred Scripture," i. p. 757; ii. pp. 575, 483.

things must be discerned; and upon the warrant of those faculties it is that every element of Divine revelation must ultimately be accepted as such. "Why even of yourselves," asked Christ, "judge ye not what is right?"

Just as in the education of the mind and in the practical training of life, we cannot dispense with the teaching and help of our fellow-men; so also is it in the spiritual sphere, morally and religiously, we are indebted, and cannot but be indebted, to others. The child relies upon the instruction given by his parents and teachers. And in mature life, most men would admit that their own individual convictions of the true and the right are confirmed when they find that they are independently adopted by a number of their neighbours and friends. This is felt to be so, even when those who agree with us are not recognised by us as being in any respect wiser or better than ourselves; and still more manifestly is this the case when the confirmation comes from those whom we cannot but regard as spiritually our superiors, —superior in wisdom, in goodness, and in a fuller inspiration. Even as those who listened to Christ were astonished at His teaching, and felt His trustworthiness and authority, so when men hear or read the words of holy men, apostles and prophets, they cannot but intuitively recognise

in their teaching the unction of the Holy One.

And yet, however high the estimate that may be formed, and rightly formed, of the inspired wisdom of the sacred writers, it is really to be disloyal to the guidance of the Divine Spirit granted to themselves, if men consent implicitly to accept the conceptions and convictions even of the inspired writers simply on their sole authority, and in defiance of that which may be felt and judged to be more nearly the very truth of God. The Apostle Paul said: "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say." In fact, no one could more earnestly denounce and repudiate any pretended claim to "dominion over our faith" than the apostles have done.

The final appeal in all moral, spiritual, and religious matters is to our personal intuitive perception and appreciation of the true and right, the good and the divine. Truth cannot be imposed upon the mind and conscience by any external authority. It is its own authority; of that authority every man must be fully persuaded in his own mind; and to its claims each one is bound to be loyal, in so far as the truth manifested commends itself to his own mind, and heart, and conscience.

VII.

THE GROUNDS OF CERTITUDE.

THE investigation of the grounds of human certitude is one of peculiar interest, and is, in fact, fundamental to all other problems in religion and in philosophy. The position taken in regard to it modifies the form in which other inquiries present themselves, as well as the results arrived at, and the theories adopted in relation to them.

In its bearings upon theology and upon religious faith, in particular, the question becomes one of vital moment. In themselves considered, the foundations upon which our certitude in respect to all departments of experience rests are, no doubt, essentially similar in character. But a deeper interest attaches to our convictions as to the realities of religion, from the fact that religion embraces matters so much more intensely personal than those which lie outside of its province.

Positivists and secularists have, it is true, tried to persuade men that their temporal and material

interests are the only things worthy of consideration ; that such speculations as those which relate to the existence of a soul, to our supposed responsibility to a moral ruler, or to the Christian notion of a spiritual and divine life possible to men, are neither serviceable nor legitimate. But the overwhelming majority of mankind remain, age after age, profoundly interested in such problems, and keenly anxious to find and be assured of the truth concerning these and other fundamental elements of religious faith and life.

It has sometimes been claimed that the facts and principles of science stand on surer and more solid ground, and possess a more valid warrant for credibility, than do theological ideas and religious beliefs. A contrast has often been drawn between our knowledge of the facts and laws of Nature, and our faith in spiritual truths and entities. But a little study of the metaphysics of science is sufficient to show how superficial such a contrast really is. Ultimately our conviction of the real existence of the universe treated of by physical science is sustained by no other warrant than that upon which we affirm the authority of goodness, and the moral government of God.

Scepticism to be consistent must place physical

science and the external world under the same category of uncertainty and illusoriness to which it insists upon relegating the obligations of religion, and the conceptions of theology. Hindu philosophy did, in fact, admit this, and honestly affirmed that all certitude was simply an illusion. Similarly, in Europe, the doctrine of Pyrrhonism pronounced certainty, in any sphere, unwarranted and unattainable. Sceptical agnosticism must, indeed, if it would be consistent, become universal scepticism.

As a matter of history, such scepticism has, however, been exceedingly rare. A satisfactory measure of "subjective assurance" has always existed, and still exists in regard to some, at least, of the objects of human knowledge and experience.

How is such certitude to be regarded? Can it be in any wise sustained and justified? Or, is it to be treated as merely a belated survival of primitive superstition? Is the attainment of unqualified assurance to be thought of as a luxury which may be dispensed with, and in which a continually decreasing number of persons may be expected to rejoice? Or, is it properly looked upon as a necessity of life, without which life itself is of but little worth? Could "flattering hopes, but no assurance," ever be regarded as

anything but a miserably unsatisfactory foundation upon which to live and act?

The term "certitude" denotes, of course, a mental or spiritual state. Whether it has reference to something purely subjective or to something regarded as objective, the certainty itself is always subjective. As Dorner has said, it is a state in which the spirit finds itself. According to the object with which it is concerned, certitude has been distinguished as empirical, logical, or intuitional.

In sensuous experience, that which we recognise exists only in virtue of our recognition of it, and only in so far as it is consciously recognised by us. The sweetness we taste, is sweetness only when we taste it. Its existence depends upon our consciousness of it. Its *esse* is *percipi*. The sensation can pretend to no other reality than the reality of our conscious experience.

In processes of reasoning and thought, there is implied an assurance as to the validity of the laws of thought. We take for granted the certainty of various relations between our several sensations and ideas; these relations constitute, in fact, the subject-matter of all our thinking. We are sure that for us, as thinking beings, the principles upon which the human mind proceeds in all its activity are permanently

reliable. We are subjectively satisfied, for instance, that the truth of the conclusion of a regularly constructed syllogism may be affirmed on the assumption of the truth of its premises. This formal, logical certitude is a reflection of the laws of thought, and is, of course, entirely subjective,—asserting no reality whatever outside of ourselves and the conditions of human thinking.

Our recognition of substantial reality or spiritual entity apparently stands on a somewhat different footing. The phenomena with which scientific knowledge is concerned are merely states of our own consciousness; but the permanent self which underlies all our states of consciousness is not itself an object of consciousness. Whatever ground, therefore, we may have for the conviction that such a self exists, must be found behind and beneath all conscious experience. So, also, with respect to the existence of a reality regarded as the external cause, or origin, or explanation of the sensations which present themselves among the facts of consciousness. The application and scope both of empirical and of logical certitude are obviously of a purely subjective character. Transcendental and ontological entities, such as the self, physical force, or the Divine Being, are affirmed with a certitude

which is properly described as intuitional or instinctive.

Idealists of the Fichtean school do, indeed, tell us that our assumption of the existence of a non-Ego, and whatever certainty we may claim to possess in relation to it, are mere illusions; that, in fact, it is the Ego itself which "posits" an external cause or substance. Idealists of a purer and more absolute sort still further assure us that the existence of a permanent self is equally supposititious and unreal; and that we are foolishly mistaken in cherishing the feeling of certitude in regard either to the reality of an external world, of a personal self, or of other beings similar to ourselves. The certitude which rests upon the intuitional or instinctive convictions of our spiritual nature is, in fact, discredited and rejected, both by the pan-phenomenalism of positivism, and by the idealism of Hegelian gnosticism, as well as by the blank negations of Pyrrhonic scepticism.

And yet, in the case of the vast majority of human beings, certainty in relation to real existence is, at least, as strong and undoubting as it is in relation to the sensations and feelings which form the immediate objects of consciousness, or to the truths and affirmations of logical or mathematical thinking. Men seem to be inevitably

constrained to accept their intuitive convictions as to ontological reality as valid and reliable, quite as surely as, and, in fact, on grounds very similar to those upon which they trust the laws of thought, or the testimony of conscious experience. It is equally impossible to prove or justify the one or the other. We cannot, it may be, advance any reason for our faith in them; but, practically, they are both inevitable and indispensable.

The various sights and sounds of which we are conscious are in ourselves. In the case, for instance, of the sense of sight, the rays of light emitted or reflected by an object enter the eye and strike the retina. The movement produced by the ether-wave, of which the ray of light consists, is transmitted along the optic nerve to the brain, and then the feeling arises to which we give the name of the particular sensation. We cannot, in strict accuracy, be said to perceive the book in our hand, or the ground on which we tread. What we are really aware of is the modification of consciousness supposed to be in some way connected with the physical effect produced in our brain by the light reflected from the surface of these or other external objects. Our conviction that such objects exist outside of us, is due to what Professor

Huxley has called "an extradition of a state of consciousness."

And so with all our other sensations, as well as those of sight. They arise in connection with certain nerve-waves which have traversed the nerve-fibres by which the brain is connected with the organs of sense. These fibres are all similar in structure, and the messages which travel along them are simply waves—forms of movement; and Professor Helmholtz has shown that whatever irritates the optic nerve, for instance, gives rise to a change in the brain, with which there is associated in our consciousness a sensation of light; and, in like manner, any impression however made upon the auditory nerve produces, in the part of the brain to which it is sent, a change which is somehow connected with the state of consciousness known by us as a sensation of sound; and so with the other nerves.

It is evident, therefore, that our sensations are nothing more than signs of objects whose supposed existence in the outer world we regard as the cause of those sensations. Subjective sensations become perceptions of external things, by virtue of an assumption which we instinctively or intuitively make as to the existence of an external origin or cause of the experience of which alone we are really and immediately con-

scious. Except for this process of "extradition" of the various states of consciousness known as sensations, the entire mass of phenomena, of which the universe as known consists, could only be regarded as simply part and parcel of our personal experience.

The position has been maintained by some, that clearness of intellectual perception constitutes a valid ground of certitude. Descartes, for instance, urged that whatever he conceived very clearly and distinctly, he must regard as unquestionably true and certain. And yet he held that even this afforded no basis of absolute certitude, and contended that our confidence in the validity of thought could only be warranted by our faith in the existence and veracity of a God. The first and fundamental affirmation of philosophy was, for Descartes, the existence of thought. But in the very existence of thought there was involved, he maintained, the existence also of a self,—*Cogito, ergo sum*.

The validity of any such inference or implication is, as we have seen, denied both by the pan-phenomenalism of Mill and Comte, and by the absolute idealism of Hegel. According to the doctrine of these philosophers, the process of thought, in the one case, and the aggregate of phenomena or states of consciousness, in the

other case, are ultimate and self-subsistent entities, beneath which we have no warrant whatever for asserting the existence of any spiritual entity or self. Philosophical Buddhism similarly refused to recognise any reality behind the fleeting phenomena of conscious experience.

But in the teeth of the teaching of all such schools of philosophy, the mass of men continue to believe in the reality and permanence of their own existence as personal beings. Their assurance of that real existence is seldom qualified by serious doubt or hesitation. The warrant, however, for the certainty enjoyed comes directly from the soul itself. No process of thought or logical inference is needed; no such process of reasoning would suffice to sustain the conviction.

Rational reflection finds its province and function in the formation of the system of our scientific knowledge. The laws of human thinking provide both the plan and the instruments by which men fashion and formulate their conceptions of the universe out of the raw materials supplied in the manifold sensations of which we are conscious. But, so far as intellectual thought or scientific knowledge are concerned, "for aught we can tell, the whole world, and all that exists or happens in it, may be nothing but a system

of appearances, with no substance whatever.”¹ “The rational significance and the systematic coherence and order” with which science invests the experiences of sensuous life, are due to the operations and faculties of the intelligence which deals with them. But reason no more warrants us in objectifying our subjective interpretation of the relations which it recognises among the elementary facts of sensation, than sense-perception warrants us in the act of extradition by which we refer certain of our states of consciousness to an external world as their origin and cause. The sole authority upon which we maintain the certainty we cherish as to the objective validity of our conceptions of, and the objective reality of substantial and intelligible entities without us, is the same as that upon which we affirm our own existence and personality, namely, the instinctive but inexplicable impulse of our spiritual nature,—an impulse which has the sanction of a mystic origin in the very roots of our being. Our only warrant for our belief in substantial existence and intelligence in the universe around us, as well as for our belief in our own existence and intelligence, is found in the intuitions of the human soul itself. In short, it is vain to

¹ Temple, “Bampton Lectures,” p. 39.

dream of any basis of certitude outside of man himself.

Our certitude, moreover, in respect to moral, spiritual, and religious beliefs, rests upon what are essentially the same foundations as those upon which, as we have seen, our confidence in regard to an external world, to the propositions of science, and to the processes and laws of thought, is based. We believe in goodness, in the claims of virtue, in the Divinity of Christ, and in the existence and the righteous beneficence of God, because the constitution of our spiritual nature impels us so to do. We cannot but admire the beautiful in form or in sound; and no more can we help but admire the qualities of kindness, purity, and sincerity. We approve the manifestations of these qualities in our own conduct and in that of others. We condemn and regret their violation. We feel, indeed, the immeasurable superiority of these and other moral qualities over all other properties and possessions, and we cannot but value and love them whenever and wherever they are met with. "We needs must love the highest when we see it." The full and perfect ideal of such moral excellence is for us the Divine, the supremely worthy of loving admiration, loyal service, and reverent worship. We cannot but believe, moreover, in

the real existence of a Personal Being in whom this ideal is perfectly realised. We affirm the being of a good and holy God, and are constrained to seek after, if haply we may find, such a Being; and we cannot but own and welcome the manifestations of the Divine in whatever measure they may appear to us. In the lives of true and noble men we catch glimpses of a principle and a power which are, we are persuaded, of God and from God. In the person, character, and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, in particular, we recognise the fullest exhibition of these ideal characteristics. And in a life of daily imitation of Him, we confess that we ourselves most nearly approach the ideal that we feel bound to set before ourselves; and at the same time most surely draw near to God and enter into a real and loving fellowship with Him. In everything that ministers to this great end, we are further compelled to acknowledge a Divine co-operation.

This is the case, for instance, in respect to the Scriptures, which are admitted to be a record of that which the writers believed had come to them as a Divine revelation. The certitude, which these writers express in regard to the Divine authority of the truths they set forth, was measured by the clearness of their personal conviction

that they were Divinely guided and helped in interpreting the spiritual significance of the facts of experience and observation, and in affirming the aspirations and instincts of their spiritual nature.

The question for us is, Can we be fully assured that they were right in thus regarding it? Are we warranted in cherishing, in reference to that which they have communicated, anything like the same assurance as that which they possessed? On what grounds, if on any, are we justified in affirming that we, too, are certain that it is, in truth, the word of God that is revealed to us through them?

In Nature, God may be said to be, in a sense, objectively revealed to men; but it is only when, and in so far as, a theistic interpretation is intuitively given to the facts of observation and experience. In like manner, it may be claimed, that the facts of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ present objectively the truth which God would have us receive concerning His relations to us and our relations to Him; but here, also, it is only when by our own spiritual faculties we apprehend the spiritual significance of those facts that they become the medium of a Divine revelation to our minds and hearts. Of course, we could not have the revelation apart from the

facts in the one case or in the other. Jesus Christ Himself is the grand central fact upon which all Christian revelation of the reflective and mediate types must rest ; but it is by our own faculties that the revelation given through Him must be discerned. In the influence of His teaching and example upon us, we instinctively recognise the presence and power of the Divine. Our confidence in regard to this is confirmed when we find that many of our fellow-men bear testimony to the manifestation in Him of the same high ideals of character and life, and gratefully acknowledge the helpfulness of the influence which He exerts upon them. It is in this way that the testimony and fellowship of others corroborates our personal convictions and
L assurance.

It has often been urged that the miracles of Christ are the chief evidence of His claims, and the main ground and warrant of our acceptance of religious truth. But many of those who witnessed the wonderful works that He performed, so far from being convinced thereby, were roused by the sight of them to a fiercer hostility towards Him, and declared that He cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub. In fact, the finger of God will be recognised, alike in the sphere of physical nature and in the history and ex-

perience of men, only by those whose spiritual faculties are awake and active. Divine over-rulings in our human affairs will pass unnoticed by unbelieving souls. Answers to prayer will be recognised only by those who offer the prayer of faith. At Nazareth, we are told, that Christ⁷ could do no mighty works because of the unbelief of the people. They lacked the spirit and disposition without which men are unable to welcome and appreciate either the manifestation of Divine power or the revelation of spiritual truth. The essential qualification for spiritual discernment is faith in goodness,—faith in the beauty, nobility, and sovereign claims of goodness and moral excellence,—faith, in short, in God as the righteous and beneficent Ruler of the world and all its affairs. In order that miracles may possess for us real significance and evidential value, there is needed the power of sympathetic appreciation of the spiritual and the Divine. Where this power was lacking or denied its legitimate exercise, even “the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,” remained unrecognised. Unhappily, in the case of many in every age, the spirit of secularism or the pride of reason prevails to smother and almost to destroy the highest faculties of human nature. And yet, we cannot but believe

that, though often buried almost out of sight, the germs of faith are to be found in every soul. Some feeble, struggling gleams, at least, of faith in goodness and in spiritual and Divine realities, and some fitful aspirations towards the true life of men, still bear witness to the Eternal and the Divine.

To these instincts of the soul, Christ and the religious truths and ideas of which He is the supreme embodiment make their appeal. By them they must be acknowledged. And in proportion as these instincts and intuitions are permitted to assert themselves, and in proportion as they are loyally followed and submitted to, Divine and spiritual things will become clearer and surer. Miracles and signs of themselves are powerless to persuade and to win to personal surrender and allegiance. It is "with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness."

Our certitude, in respect to the claims of moral excellence, is still further confirmed by experience of the peace, and hope, and blessedness which are enjoyed by those who honour those claims by practical submission and surrender to them. Growth in assurance is the result of the practical testing of the highest and noblest impulses of our nature. Taking Christ, in particular, as our model, and relying upon the inspiration and

help which we are persuaded He is able to impart, we come to enjoy more and more fully the conscious experience of His living power within our souls; and we are able with the apostle to say, "I know in whom I have believed."

Just as our intuitive faith in the reality of an external world, and in the validity of the processes of thought, is verified by our experience of their reliableness and serviceableness, so our faith in the moral and spiritual impulses of our nature is verified by the happy results of an unreserved surrender to their guidance and control. The blessedness of a life of faith, though not the primary ground upon which we recognise its title to our loyalty and devotion, is yet an indorsement and a seal to that title, and supplies a strong confirmation to our intuitive persuasion of the supremacy and real divinity of its claims. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."

VIII.

THE NATURE OF SIN.

CANON LIDDON has said: "It would be a very great error to suppose that Christianity has invented the idea of sin only for the purpose of remedying it. If sin were not a fact independent of Christianity, if it were not an integral feature of human life, Christianity would long ago have perished."¹ As a matter of fact, all the great religious systems of the world have recognised the reality of sin; some interpreting it and accounting for it in one way, and some in another. In a number of the prayers contained in the Vedas of the early Aryan religion, for instance, we find distinct acknowledgment of the consciousness of sin. Similarly in the Zend-Avesta of the Iranians, and in the liturgies of the ancient Assyrians, we have the recognition of the sinfulness of the worshippers, and the declaration of belief in the value and efficacy of the confession of wrong-doing. Passages also in the Egyptian Book of the Dead reveal the same

¹ "Some Elements of Religion," p. 127.

sense of sin and guilt, and the desire for Divine forgiveness. The works of Cicero, Ovid, Seneca, and other Roman writers, bear similar witness. Indeed, in almost every part of the world evidence may be found that, in every stage of development and culture, men have been sensible of their unworthiness, wickedness, and ill-desert. In the almost universal practice of sacrificial worship, the ideas of compensation for offences committed, and of expiation of the guilt thereby incurred, are very frequently embodied. Even in Vedic times, Sir Monier Williams affirms that the idea of the expiation of sin was gradually introduced into the sacrificial rites of the Aryans. Among Greeks and Romans, too, sacrifice was not unfrequently regarded as the means by which the wrath of the gods, provoked by the transgressions of which men had been guilty, might be averted. This was the case, also, with respect to some of the sacrifices offered by the Phœnicians and the Carthaginians.

What, then, is the meaning of this universally recognised element in human life and experience? What is sin? Definitions have been given according to which sin is explained as "a deviation by a human being from the Divine Law," or, again, as "something in the conduct or character of man which is not in agreement with the will

of God." The idea is not essentially different when sin is described as "failure to realise the ideal authoritatively presented to and imposed upon men." By others, however, the application of the term has been limited to definite, voluntary acts of disobedience. According to this, the Pelagian theory, sin involves both the knowledge of what is wrong and the deliberate exercise of the power of choosing the evil. In opposition to this narrow and inadequate conception, Dr. Dale has pointed out in his *Christian Doctrine*, that "it is sinful for a child not to love a parent, and for a parent not to love a child; but love is not a volition, and it cannot be commanded by the will. It is sinful not to be grateful for kindness; but though a man may be ashamed of his ingratitude, and feel the guilt of it, the will has no power to command it. Some of the fiercest and most prolonged conflicts of the moral and spiritual life are against evil passions, which, though beaten down by the will, are not destroyed. They may be cast out by the power and grace of Christ in answer to prayer; but while they remain in the heart, a man is conscious of sin and guilt, even when the whole force of his will is being exerted to conquer them. Human conduct is not a succession of isolated acts; it reveals certain permanent moral

qualities which constitute what we call character. There are elements of good and evil in the very life of a man. What he says and what he does, disclose what he is. He is a bad man, not only because he voluntarily says and does many wicked things, but because he himself is wicked ; his very life is corrupt.”¹

To a considerable extent, of course, what a man is to-day is the result of the actual thoughts and deeds that he voluntarily entertained and committed in days gone by, and for which he was and is responsible. But this is not a complete account of the evil dispositions and impulses which manifest themselves in human life. As Dr. Dale has further pointed out, men are constitutionally cold, selfish, suspicious, vain, proud, unmerciful, and cruel, as well as cowardly and covetous. Tendencies to these forms of evil are an original part of our constitution, elements of our character from the very beginning of our conscious existence. This is what is meant when, in theological phrase, we speak of original sin. It is the evil heart, the old man, the sin that dwelleth in us. Conscious experience testifies to the truth of this doctrine. Men “know that there is more in them of the nature of sin than mere acts and exercises ; that their heart is not

¹ “Christian Doctrine,” p. 201.

altogether right in the sight of God ; that the fountain from which the waters flow is itself bitter ; that the tree is known by its fruit."

Widely different views have been taken by philosophical and other writers as to what constitutes the essential principle of sin.

I. According to some, sin is merely the necessary result of the limitations of a finite being. The aim of Leibnitz, in his *Theodicée*, was to show that the existence of sin is not inconsistent with the character and government of God. As he regarded God as the origin and author of all that is, and held that the actual world is the best of all possible worlds, he was led to account for sin by describing it as a mere privation, an inevitable outcome of man's finiteness as a creature. Spinoza held a similar view. If other beings beside God were to exist at all, they must, it is contended, be less than infinite, and therefore, in so far as they were finite, there must be in them something of defect, something, that is, of evil. "Being is good ; evil is the limitation of being. Moral evil is simply something that is lacking, something whose non-actuality we regard as a privation ; in reality, it is no more evil for a man to be unloving or insincere than it is for a horse to be unable to fly, or a

whale to be unable to live entirely under water."

Professor Pfeiderer, whilst condemning these earlier forms of this doctrine as inadequate, advances what is really only a slight modification of it. He regards moral evil as "good in the making," the stumbling without which a man cannot learn to walk uprightly. It is not, he says, an evil for a man to be without wings, but it is an evil for him to be without hands. Moral evil is the lack of something that belongs to the nature, to the purpose and idea, to the perfecting of our existence. It is, in his view, the discrepancy of the actual from the ideal,—not our own ideal merely, but the Divine ideal of man, which is "the ground and the law of the moral process of humanity." The method adopted by God for the realisation of His purpose was that the ideal should be gradually evolved. Moral evil is simply an incomplete stage in the process. The imperfection which we call sin is an inevitable incident of the process by which the ideal is to be reached. Our sense of sin is our consciousness of the incompleteness of the process, a sense of dissatisfaction with the actual state in which we find ourselves, which God employs as an element and instrument in our education and training; it is, in short, the discipline necessary for the

perfecting of finite character. The sense of demerit, and the feeling of guiltiness with which men have come to regard their non-attainment of the ideal, are thus virtually repudiated by the doctrine in the later as well as in the earlier form. If there be any blame attaching to sin, it should be ascribed to God, rather than to men who cannot help but sin. By struggling against it, they may become more nearly what they were meant to be, but that they should sin is natural and inevitable. It is the ladder by which God has ordained that men shall climb towards a perfect character and condition.

II. Another view of the nature of sin regards it as the result of the bodily and physical constitution of man. Schleiermacher describes it as "a positive opposition of the flesh to the spirit." Men are sinners because they prefer the gratification of bodily appetites to the satisfaction of the higher principles of their nature. But it is not true that all sensuous indulgence is evil, nor is all moral evil found in connection with the bodily senses and desires. The responsibility for the badly regulated gratification of our appetites and passions really belongs to the spirit—the personal Ego. Such vices, moreover, as ambition, pride, and hypocrisy, have no obvious or necessary connection with

our physical nature. The corollary of this view of sin is the exaltation of asceticism as the constitutive principle of virtue, and the means of deliverance from a sinful condition.

Like the previous doctrine, this theory also, inasmuch as it regards sin as due to the fact that man is not pure spirit, but a spiritual being conditioned and fettered by a material organism, makes sin necessary, and therefore not to be held blameworthy.

III. Dr. Julius Müller and others have held that sin is essentially selfishness. Selfishness is, they maintain, the fundamental principle of sin in its every form and manifestation. But this doctrine, though less objectionable than the theories already referred to, and less distinctly opposed to the testimony of consciousness, cannot be regarded as adequate or satisfactory. It is not true that all self-regarding acts and motives are wrong. In fact, that the self should seek to express and realise itself is involved in the very idea of selfhood. Its own welfare and culture is a true and legitimate end for the Ego to place before itself. In subordination to the will and glory of God, it is not only permissible but obligatory upon man to seek his own highest culture and development. The fallacy of all altruistic systems is that they overlook this

essential principle of sound ethical philosophy. Then, again, it is not true that all sin is due to selfish aims and motives. Parents have sinned for the sake of their children. Subjects have sinned through loyalty to their sovereigns. There are sins, moreover, such as those of malice, or revenge, in which there is apparently little or no element of selfishness involved.

IV. Probably the most accurate account of the nature of sin is that which describes it as springing from the lack of faith in God and loyalty to His authority. Sensualism is sinful, and selfishness is sinful, because God wills that we should keep the body with all its appetites in subordination and subjection to higher spiritual ends and objects, and that we should have regard in our conduct, not simply to our own good, but also to that of our fellow-men. It is, in short, the authority of God which makes duty obligatory. Sin is sin because it is a violation of God's will imposed upon us, a frustration of His purpose concerning us. It springs primarily from our want of loyalty to Him who is our rightful ruler. And our disloyalty is ultimately due to our lack of trust in God, the Righteous and Holy One. With true, perfect, unreserved, unquestioning faith in God, in His wise and righteous

authority, we could not but be loyal to His commands.

The statement sometimes made that sin is essentially ungodliness, or alienation from God, is evidently the same thing as saying that it consists in unbelief and disloyalty. Godliness is the practical recognition of the Divine authority—faith in it, and loyal obedience to its behests.

So, too, the view advanced by some that sin consists in the absence of love to God, is only another way of saying that it is the lack of loyal regard to the ideal of character and action which God has enjoined upon us, and of which He is regarded as the perfect embodiment. Those who describe sin as the want of love to God, generally explain that love in this connection is not to be understood as the love of gratitude for kindness received merely or mainly; but the love of appreciation and complacency. It is the admiration and approval of, and the desire and effort to be in harmony with, the ideal nature and character placed before us by God Himself. And this is really what is meant by a practical faith,—the faith of loyal obedience to God.

IX.

THE PENALTY OF SIN.

BY penalty is meant the pain or loss that is suffered, presumably as the consequence of transgression. Augustine says: "Evil is twofold; there is the evil which a man does, and the evil which he suffers; what he does is sin, and what he suffers is punishment." Man, conscious that he is a sinner, a doer of evil, a rebel against the authority and will of the Divine Ruler, feels that he deserves to suffer evil. And when he does suffer evil, he instinctively and inevitably construes it and explains it to himself as appointed by God for the purpose of revealing the displeasure of the Ruler against whom he knows that he has sinned.

That in this world men are subject to disease, sorrow, suffering, death, and many forms of unhappiness and evil, is only too obvious; and it is almost as undeniable that the greater part of all the ills that flesh is heir to, and of all the unhappiness of man's condition, is connected directly or indirectly with sin as its origin and

cause. The physical evils which come to men through purely physical catastrophes, such as earthquakes or storms, might, no doubt, be regarded as in no way the result of sin; but even these may, in some way which we cannot now apprehend, be part of the curse which sin has entailed. As Oosterzee says, "The whole creation shares involuntarily in the consequences of the fall, and, as in a chaotic state, looks forward with eager desire to freedom and transformation."¹ "The groaning and travailing in pain together of the whole creation" is due, Dr. Bushnell says, "to the bad miracle of sin."

It is true, of course, that the pain and the other forms of misery and evil endured are not always due to the sin of the sufferer. Each sinner is, however, conscious of his ill-desert. He feels himself to be out of harmony with "the Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness." What he deserves he does not know; but, however much he suffers, in the depth of his spiritual nature he cannot but own that it can never be more or worse than he deserves. When a man is truly and fully alive to his own sinfulness, he cannot but acknowledge, if he is really honest with himself, that he deserves his lot of pain and misery

¹ "Christian Dogmatics," p. 437.

whatever it may be, and from whatever quarter the evils under which he suffers may seem to have come. The fact that he can or cannot trace their connection directly with his own personal wrong-doing, makes little or no difference. He feels that he deserves them all. He owns that they are all God's appointment, and that he has no valid ground of complaint on account of them. Butler says, "Our sense or discernment of actions as morally good or evil, implies in it a sense or discernment of them as of good or ill desert." "There is in human creatures an association of the two ideas — natural and moral evil, wickedness and punishment."¹

The sense of his ill-desert leads the sinner to accept pain as the natural and fitting accompaniment of his sin, even when the suffering is not directly the result of his sin. In some cases, the suffering endured is recognised as the natural and direct consequence of the wrong which he has done; but, in other cases, there is a consciousness that God has manifested His displeasure in and through the infliction of evils which have no obvious connection with his own personal transgression. The sinner's consciousness of guilt and ill-desert is, in short, much wider and more comprehensive than any relation

¹ Dissertation "On the Nature of Virtue."

of cause and effect which he can trace between his fault and the pain and sorrow which befall him. It simply assures him that sin deserves and will somehow meet with penalty. Pain and misery are believed to proceed from God, or, at any rate, to be according to Divine ordinance, not merely when they can be traced to the operation of natural laws set in motion by man's transgression, but universally, because God has revealed Himself as the Moral Governor of the Universe.

It is, then, the consciousness that as sinners we are ill-deserving which gives to pain and sorrow their character and aspect of penalty. But for the bad consciousness—the guilty conscience—pain and sorrow would be merely misfortunes, physical evils to which, with faith in the wisdom and goodness of the Divine Ruler of the world, we might and would cheerfully submit, as being in reality only blessings in disguise. And in so far as we are unconscious of ill-desert, the troubles which befall us lose the character of punitive inflictions. The tower in Siloam fell upon those who were not specially or peculiarly guilty; but they were sinners, and so they really deserved the fate that befell them.

But why, it may be asked, does not the Divine Ruler mete out penalties to sinners precisely

equivalent to their deserts, according, that is, to the degree in which they have transgressed His laws? Why should it so often happen that the less guilty suffer more severely, whilst the more guilty escape so easily? Why should the wicked sometimes flourish like the green bay-tree, whilst the comparatively righteous have to endure a heavy share of the pains and woes of life?

Of this problem, by which the minds and hearts of men have been perplexed—as the book of Job so signally indicates—from an early period in the history of the race, several solutions, probably containing some elements of truth, have been suggested.

I. Schleiermacher held the opinion that the collective evil in the world is to be regarded as the penalty of the sins of men in a collective capacity. The whole of the present state of the world is conceived of as due to a divinely established correspondence with the moral condition of its inhabitants. In the framing of nature, and in the ordinance of death in particular as the universal lot of all creatures on earth, God had regard to the eventual entrance of moral evil. This environment of pain and sorrow, sinful men are impelled sub-

jectively to regard, and were intended by God to regard, as the penalty of sin, in order that they might be led to realise that sin was an evil and a bitter thing.

II. Dr. James Hinton says: "Love cannot be explained, nor the secret of its happiness be revealed, except in a world where pain and sorrow abound." True blessedness is to be found in the joy of the willing endurance of evil. "A life from which everything that has in it the element of pain is banished, becomes a life not worth having, or worse, of intolerable tedium and disgust. There is ample proof in the experience of the foolish among the rich, that no course is more fatal to pleasure than to succeed in putting aside everything that can call for endurance. The stronger and more generous faculties of our nature, debarred from their true exercise, avenge themselves by poisoning and embittering all that remains." "The principle is embodied in the now universally recognised doctrine of the necessity of work—*itself an irksome thing*—in order to happiness." "In healthful and natural life, endurance is essential to pleasure. Our enjoyment, by the very construction of our nature, absorbs and takes into itself, as a necessary element, a certain amount of pain,—that is, of what would

if it stood by itself be pain. A strong and healthy person can absorb into his pleasure a really large amount of what would otherwise be pain,—that, for instance, of a hard day's hunting or rowing, or the ascent of a considerable mountain; or he will enjoy a great amount of risk, as we read in the life of Stephenson that the navvies in his day preferred the most dangerous tasks."¹

The conception thus contended for is that sorrow and outward evils are necessary for the development and culture of the souls of men; in particular, they may be held to constitute the conditions without which there could be no opportunity for kindness and loving sacrifice, no possibility of the manifestation of a Christ-like spirit. "Inasmuch as ye are partakers," said Peter, "of Christ's sufferings, rejoice." And Paul says, "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake, which is the Church."

III. Somewhat similar is the interpretation of the pain and sorrow that fall to the lot of men, as being, to a large extent, disciplinary, needful, that is, for the purifying of men's natures. Bishop Huntingdon has given expression to this view when he says: "Character depends

¹ "The Mystery of Pain," pp. 41, 47, 48.

on inward strength. But this strength has two conditions; it is increased only by being put forth, and it is tested only by some resistance. It must enter into conflict with an antagonist; it must stand in comparison with something formidable enough to be a standard of its power. Suffering in some of its forms must be introduced to put the genuineness of faith to the proof, and to purify it of its dross. What special form it shall take for each, it is for God, who knows us better than we know ourselves, to decide. Mary and Martha must see Lazarus die. The manliest sons and loveliest daughters must be buried out of some families; and in others, ingratitude or vice must spread a far more dreadful mourning."¹ Sorrow and loss are "ordained to discipline us into independence of the world, and into heirship of immortality."

The explanation thus presented of the presence of much of the evil to which we are subjected is that it is disciplinary—as the pruner's knife to the grossly growing fruit-tree, as the furnace fire to the metal to be purified from the dross which clings to it. This is an attempt to solve the problem of the existence of what is called "natural evil," which has been adopted by many earnest thinkers. Rothe, Pfleiderer, Martineau,

¹ "Sermons for the People," p. 242.

and Browning have all given expression to this view of the subject.

IV. The apparently unequal distribution of penalties—the fact that pain and sorrow do not fall in equal measure upon those who are equally ill-deserving—has been thought to be explained by reference to a future life, in which the inequalities of the present life will be adjusted, and as having been arranged and appointed for the purpose of leading forward men's thoughts and hopes to that future. The tendency of goodness is to produce happiness, and that of sin to produce unhappiness; but this tendency needs time, ample time—sometimes what appears to us tediously ample time—to work out fully the results at which it aims. This condition of sufficient time is not provided in our present earthly life. Dr. C. J. Vaughan says: "The world, so full of imperfection, suffering, and injustice, seems to indicate the certainty of a future restitution of all things."

This was the thought of Kant, who taught that the highest good could only be realised in an eternity of being. Certainly the absence of perfect equity in the distribution of the ills of the present life seems to give emphasis to our natural hope of a life hereafter; and it may be that the inequality was permitted and intended

to stimulate and confirm the anticipations of a state in which righteousness and happiness shall be combined in complete and absolute harmony.

There is, we may acknowledge, truth in each of these views, and yet they cannot, even unitedly, be regarded as adequate as a complete and satisfying solution of the problem.

The becoming and proper attitude of the sinner towards the evils which God in His government and providence permits to befall him is, in truth, simply that of reverent submission and acquiescence. Any attempt or pretence on his part to estimate the equity of the evils he suffers, or to ask why he should suffer so much, whilst those who seem to him to have sinned more grievously and to be more deserving of suffering are less severely visited, presents, in fact, what is perilously near to an appearance of irreverent impertinence.

Moreover, whilst to a certain extent the sinner may be able to discover and to believe that the purpose of God in the evils which come upon him as a sinner is that he may thereby be disciplined and trained, yet the spirit of humility and reverent loyalty will compel him to own that there may be a meaning and an aim in those evils which lie wholly beyond his power to

apprehend or conjecture. Enough for him to know that he deserves to suffer evil because of the evil of which he feels that he has been guilty; and to be able to cherish the hope that when he is perfectly freed from sin he shall, under the wise and gracious government of God, be perfectly free from sorrow and pain and every natural evil. Beyond this, human thought and speculation cannot safely or lawfully take us. The problem and mystery of the existence of natural evil, the manifold sufferings that are the lot of men in this world of sin, are, in fact, absolutely swallowed up by the still greater mystery of the existence of moral evil, of the disobedience of finite creatures, their abuse of the freedom intrusted to them by the All-wise and All-loving Creator, who, in conferring that freedom, knew that it would be abused by those to whom it was given. Dr. Reid well says: "If it be asked, why does God permit sin in His creation; I confess I cannot answer the question, but must lay my hand upon my mouth. He giveth no account of His conduct to the children of men. It is our part to obey His commands, and not to say unto Him, Why dost Thou thus?"¹

So, in a similar spirit, we may affirm that it is not for us to ask why God should have chosen

¹ "Active Powers of Man," essay iv. ch. ii. p. 444.

to reveal His displeasure against disobedience through and by means of natural evils,—sorrow, suffering, loss, and death. We may assert that it is of the essence of law that it should be accompanied by penal sanctions. But the reason and ground of this, even if its truth be admitted, we cannot hope fully, if in any degree, to discover. The fact that it is so, or, at least, that to us it seems to be so, must be acknowledged by us and acquiesced in with cheerful submissiveness.

It has sometimes, indeed, been urged that, over and above the spiritual disorder and death of sin itself, physical suffering is its necessary and unavoidable consequence; but we hardly speak wisely or modestly when we talk of necessity and inevitableness in such a connection. God has been pleased so to order it that moral evil should be conjoined with unhappiness and sorrow, or that we, at least, should regard them as conjoined; but why He did so we dare not pretend that we are fully competent to determine. As Lotze says: "After all, we do not understand why the bad disposition which entered the world in consequence of (the abuse of) such freedom needed to have any physical result at all."¹

¹ "Outlines of Philosophy of Religion," p. 125.

X.

THE HEALING OF SIN.

PERSONAL consciousness and the universal testimony of mankind bear witness to the fact that the human ideal of character and conduct is never realised. Man everywhere feels and confesses himself to be an imperfect, faulty, and sinful creature. He acknowledges, moreover, that he is ill-deserving, and he finds that he is actually exposed to pain and sorrow which he cannot but recognise as being deserved by him on account of his shortcoming and wrong-doing.

A candid analysis of personal consciousness leads to the further conviction, that the moral quality of the dispositions, motives, and ruling principles of the inner life, are not what they ought to be; that, in short, the inmost nature, the native character, of man is prone to sin. We are constrained to admit that we are born with certain evil elements of character, that there is a hereditary warp or taint in our spiritual constitution. In other words, men are morally and spiritually diseased.

The salvation, therefore, of which men stand in need is one that may most properly be described as the healing of a spiritual disease. Men need and desire, it is true, to be delivered from the unhappiness of their condition, but they need also, and first of all, to be delivered from the blame and displeasure with which they are conscious that God regards them, and of which the outward evils that they endure are felt to be the evidence and the manifestation. And in order to that, they need to be delivered from the evil inclinations and impulses which are found to be inherent in their spiritual constitution.

It is vain to seek to be saved from the outward evil as long as the inward mischief, which compels the confession that our condition of unhappiness is deserved, still remains. It is useless and foolish to ask, "Who will show us any good? Who will point out to us the way to be happy?" until we have learned the way to become good. For man to be saved, is for him to be assured of the forgiveness of God, and at the same time to be so spiritually healed and changed as to be released from the bondage of the inward evil by which he is continually being led to do such things as expose him to the displeasure of a righteous and holy God. If the

salvation of a sinner is possible, it can only be by his being healed—spiritually healed—healed by a remedial process which brings about an inner, spiritual change in his nature and character. No measure of merely external reformation can, therefore, be regarded as a true and adequate remedy for the evil condition in which men find themselves. Still less can any deliverance from outward or natural evil, from danger, pain, sorrow, or penalty, really touch the root of the evil, the moral and spiritual disease from which man suffers—the disease of sin.

It is interesting and significant to note that in the New Testament Scriptures, the same Greek words, σώζω and σωτηρία, are used to denote the healing and the health, the saving and the salvation of the souls, as well as of the bodies of men.

Now, to effect this spiritual healing, something is required which men do not themselves possess. Experience and testimony unite in affirming that man's own strength and resources, individual and collective, are utterly incompetent to heal or help him.

Seneca, for instance, asked in utter hopelessness, "How or when can we deliver ourselves from this folly? Who has power, of himself, to emerge from the whirlpool of its fluctuations?"

We need for this the hand of someone else. Some other than ourselves must help us out.”¹ And long before Seneca, we find in the Hindu Scriptures a similar confession, “I move along tremblingly, like a cloud driven by the wind. Through want of strength, I stray from the path. Have mercy, Almighty, have mercy! Release me, like a calf from the rope that shackles it, that I may henceforth, set free from the service of sin, do service to my Lord.”² “Who shall deliver me,” said the Apostle Paul, “from this body of death?”—this inbred corruption which drags me down?

The spiritual need of men is to receive a new life, a superhuman strength, to be renewed in the spirit of their minds, to be saved, and to be saved in being healed. The Christian Gospel proclaims Christ as the Physician of Souls, and assures us that the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus is the one and only remedy for the disease of sin.

Phenomenally or symptomatically considered, the mode in which the healing, remedial process is manifested, is the experience of the individual, to which we give the name of repentance.

To repent is to have the process of healing, at least, initiated; it is the symptom and the

¹ “Epistle 52.”

² Rig-veda, “Hymn to Varuna.”

sign of the beginning of a course of restoration. As a matter of personal experience, repentance may be said to be salvation, the healing of the disease of sin.

What, then, is the precise nature of this experience known as repentance? Martensen has defined it as "a deep, internal concern, a soul-pain and contrition concerning sin, in which the man judges his sin, and honours the truth against himself."¹ It is pain and grief, not so much for this or that sinful action, but for the whole sinful and guilty state. Moreover, it does not consist simply in the feeling and spirit of grief and self-condemnation, but it also, as Martensen says, "passes over into faith in God's pitying love, and lays hold of the comfort of the Gospel." Without this faith in the forgiving love of God, sorrow and grief because of sin would inevitably lead to despair.

According to Kant, repentance is an ethical transformation of character,—a transformation of character which involves, in some measure, the endurance of the penalties of past misdeeds. The pain of subduing and mortifying the evil tendencies and principles of our corrupt nature, the putting off the old man and the putting on the new man is, he says, the beginning of a

¹ "Christian Ethics (Individual)," p. 142.

long series of struggles and sufferings which the new man undertakes for the sake of ethical purity and development, sorrow and trouble due to the old man whose deeds are renounced and repented of.

As Matthew Arnold has pointed out, the three cardinal elements in the theology of the Apostle Paul are—"dying with Christ; resurrection with Christ from the death in sin; and growing into Christ." And in the conception of a death with Christ to sin and self, there is undoubtedly implied what cannot but be regarded as the essential element in the experience denoted and described by the term repentance.

In the New Testament there are two Greek verbs rendered in English by the word "repent," *μεταμέλομαι* and *μετανοίω*. The former literally means, "I am concerned after," "I feel concern after"; the latter, "I meditate," or "reflect upon afterwards." The noun *μετανοῖα* would thus mean "after-thought," and *μεταμέλεια*—a noun which, however, is never used in the New Testament—"after-concern." But in general usage, of course, an after-thought naturally comes to mean a change of thought, and an after-concern to denote concern on account of some particular action or course of conduct with which a change of mind is associated.

Repentance as presented in the Christian Scriptures may accordingly be properly enough defined, in the words of Dr. Wardlaw, as "a change of mind accompanied with heartfelt concern."

The Shorter Catechism explains that "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience."

The Apostle Paul seems further to distinguish between repentance unto life, and a repentance which is not unto life. Apart from the apprehension of Divine mercy, a true sense of sin would, as already said, lead only to despair,—in Paul's phrase, would "work death." And so, on the other hand, a hope in the mercy of God, without a true sense of sin and an earnest renunciation of it, leads to careless presumption in continued and impenitent sin.

Further, it must be borne in mind, that true repentance has reference not to this or that single action, but to the whole sinful state and disposition of the sinner; and that it is not to be conceived of as simply a feeling of regret and grief and self-condemnation for the past, but as

essentially including also a solemn, earnest, and unreserved determination, by God's help, to turn away from all that is sinful, and to strive to attain and fulfil all that is right, and true, and pure, and good. Repentance, in short, is such a complete reversal both of opinion and of feeling, in regard to all disobedience and imperfection, as produces abhorrence of sin, and a resolute, practical, effective turning away from sin, and an intense longing and effort after all righteousness and goodness.

Now such an experience is evidently the initial stage in the spiritual healing of which the sinner stands in need. It is salvation begun. It is the evidence of the re-establishment in the soul of the living principle of a virtuous and holy life. It involves the willing, cordial acceptance of the law of right and duty. And it is the surrender of the evil in our nature to the righteous condemnation of the Divine Law. It thus comprises the essential conditions and elements of the initiation of a moral restoration. There is, in fact, in the actual experience of sincere, thorough, practical repentance, the beginning and the germ of a new and better moral life and character. And the healing, or saving process thus initiated, if carried on, will bring complete salvation. The disease of sin

will be more and more entirely cured, and the sinner will be gradually made perfectly whole.

Of course, if by repentance a reformation merely of the outward conduct and life were understood—a mere abstinence from open, actual transgression,—such repentance would obviously fail to touch the essential principles of true morality. Or if, on the other hand, the idea of repentance accepted were that it simply consists in feelings of compunction, fear, or remorse,—so far from having any real moral or spiritual value, such repentance could only be described as inadequate and non-moral. The Church of Rome has, indeed, distinctly taught that true and genuine repentance, which it designates "*contritio*"—the sorrow for sin which is connected with the hatred of it, and the practical repudiation of it,—that this is not essential to forgiveness and to the attainment of all the blessings of salvation. It affirms that what is called "*attritio*"—a sorrow which proceeds not from the sense of the evil of sin in itself, but from the loss, the shame, the inconvenience, or the suffering of any kind of which sin is regarded as the cause or the occasion,—that that is a sufficient substitute for "*contritio*," "entitling the sinner to receive absolution." But such a condition of thought or feeling as this "*attritio*" really produces no moral change in a

sinner,—no change which, in the estimate of true spiritual ethics or religion, is of any real value.

For the most part, men do not live and act according to mere momentary impulses, but according to certain definite, well-established principles, maxims, and habits. These settled principles of conduct are, however, capable of being regarded comprehensively as essentially included in one or other of two all-pervasive and all-dominant maxims,—self-gratification, *or* loyalty to Divine authority. No doubt, there are many men who are kind-hearted, sympathetic, generous, helpful, honest, pure, and truthful, who are far from being loyal to religious principle. But in the absence of a fixed and universal maxim of loyal obedience and consecration to God, the principle of self-indulgence will, at some point or other, assert itself, and prove the man to be, in truth, the servant of sin. The radical principle of the life still needs to be changed before the disease of sin can be remedied. Spiritual health can consist only in the genuine and unreserved surrender of the will to the authority and will of God. No amiable palliations of the evil disposition; no occasional or partial acceptance of a higher and nobler rule of life, can possibly be regarded as sufficient to heal and save the soul. The remedy demanded must be radical and universal

in its operation. For a creature affected and infected by the disease of sin, healing can only come in the form of a complete turning about in the direction, the drift, and the supreme governing principle of his inmost life. The repentance which brings salvation becomes, in short, a conversion, a new birth, a new principle and manner of life. Such a change no considerations of selfish fear, no prudential calculations, can possibly bring about.

The repentance which has real moral value and efficacy is, as a matter of fact, the initial stage of sanctification, as well as of outward reformation. It is the decisive act by which the sinner's emancipation from the enthralling power of evil is effected. It is the setting up within him of the universal dominion of a pure and good will,—the will and purpose to be absolutely, and in all things, loyal to the law of God.

Without such repentance, real ethical improvement is utterly impossible. With it, great things may and will be attained and realised. By the all-conquering power of the new life of the Spirit imparted to all who, in the exercise of humble trust in God, honestly and resolutely commit themselves to it, there is assured to the penitent soul the promise and potency of all moral

improvement, development, achievement, and excellence.

It is significant and instructive to notice that John the Baptist and Jesus Christ both began their public ministry by calling men to repentance. Our Saviour even declared that the calling of sinners to repentance was the great object of His mission; and in the commission which He gave to His disciples, this duty was put in the forefront of the ministry they were to discharge. The apostles, after their Master had left them, went about preaching repentance towards God; and in their writings, repentance is spoken of as among "the first principles of the doctrine of Christ."

The experience which is so constantly insisted upon by Christ and His apostles has been described as "a new and unconditional 'Yea,' in place of the former wrongful 'Nay,' the beginning of a new line, an entire reversal of life." It is to be distinguished from regeneration only in form. Repentance is the same thing regarded on its human side as regeneration regarded on its Divine side. "Men must be born again by God, but they must themselves repent; though this, of course, is by the aid of a higher power." Repentance includes genuine sorrow towards God on account of the sinful past, an internal repugnance

to sin, an actual forsaking of sin, and a joyous surrender and consecration to the will and service of God. "It belongs to the essence of real repentance that it gradually develops into the life of sanctification. It cannot rest till the old things are entirely passed away, and all things are become new."¹

"Repentance towards God is the change of mind otherwise described as a renewing in the spirit of the mind, a creating in the image of God in righteousness and holiness of the truth. It is repentance unto life, a change of mind unto life, inasmuch as by undergoing this change men pass from death unto life, from the death of sin unto the life of holiness."² This change of mind is regeneration. The only difference between the two terms is, that regeneration designates the effect from a reference to its cause, while repentance designates it with respect to its nature.

How then is this repentance to be produced? By what influence can the sinner who is in bondage to evil be induced to take the initial step in the process through which, by the co-operation of Divine power, he may be healed and saved, and rise to a better and happier state?

Can it be supposed that the endurance of the

¹ Oosterzee, "Christian Dogmatics," p. 646.

² *Ibid.*, p. 647.

pain and sorrow which are recognised by the sinner as the deserved consequences or accompaniments of his sin can bring about this change of mind and will? or that the anticipation of such consequences can have that effect?

The feeling of attrition, due to the experience of punishment, may undoubtedly lead to a considerable measure of outward reformation; but we cannot conceive of it as capable of touching and changing the inner spiritual spring of the moral life. Suffering of itself, however close the connection which may be recognised between it and our sin, will never, we may safely affirm, change the heart, can never produce the sorrow of true penitence, can never beget the goodwill, can never lead to the adoption of the maxim of universal and unreserved obedience, as the supreme motive and guide of life. The natural effect of the endurance of suffering, which is felt to be the penalty of sin, is simply and solely to drive the wrong-doer farther away from the Ruler whose law has been broken, and to harden his heart more and more against that Ruler.

Penalty, in itself, no more possesses a curative power, than pain possesses such a power to heal the disease of the body from which it springs. "If the punishment of sin were sufficient of itself to effect repentance and restoration, the

dispensation of justice would be substantially equivalent to a dispensation of grace; and no more would be needed.”¹ “If,” as the apostle says, “righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought.”

The dispensation of grace implies something over and above any dispensation of natural justice by which it may be supposed that pain and suffering come to sinners as the result of their sin.

A true change of mind in regard to sin can, in fact, be brought about only by the realisation of the loving purpose of God to make us righteous and good. Now that purpose cannot be discovered by us from the experience and consideration simply of the painful consequences which sin seems to us to have brought upon us. The great Lawgiver and Judge must be revealed to the mind and heart of a sinner as a God of Love and Mercy, as well as a Holy and Righteous God, in order that he may experience the radical change of feeling and purpose in regard to sin which we term repentance. Until this conception of God’s feeling and purpose towards him is apprehended, there is no possibility either of his being truly sorry for his sin as disobedience and disloyalty towards Him,

¹ Murphy, “Scientific Bases of Faith,” p. 313.

or of his forming an honest and earnest purpose of amendment and entire consecration for the future. Without this realisation of the Divine love and mercy, the motive and the inspiration alike for the sorrow for the past, and the purpose for the future, are wanting. *Attrition* there might be, regret, that is to say, that certain things had been done which exposed the transgressor to various pains and penalties, but the entire re-setting of the spiritual nature in its relation to the will of God there cannot be. It is the recognition of the goodwill of God towards us, in spite of our sin and ill-desert; the belief in His forgiving and restoring love and grace, by which alone the sinner can be spiritually changed and healed.

Now this loving purpose and this goodwill of God towards us are not *so* expressed, in the pain and sorrow which we regard as the penal consequences of our disobedience, as to persuade and convince us of the real existence of these feelings of God in regard to us. In fact, the consciousness of our sin and ill-desert utterly prevents us from seeing through and beyond the penalty to the love which is at the very heart of the holiness and righteousness of God. Nay, more, it constrains us, in the light of penal suffering, to interpret God as a hard master, a

vindictive ruler, concerned only or mainly to visit us with pain and misery according to our felt deserts.

Possibly, apart from any special revelation of Divine love and grace in regard to sinners, men might have had some occasional, vague, and unverifiable surmises and hopes that, perchance, the God against whom they had sinned might be in relation to them at least as patient, kind, and forgiving as men themselves at times may be in their kindest and most tender feelings and relations to one another. But some clearer and more authoritative confirmation of such a conception of the Divine love and forgiveness was needed, than any that is supplied by the general revelation of God given to men in nature or in history, before their hearts could be assured that such was actually the case, and before they could venture to turn to Him in penitent and hopeful trust.

But when the reality and certainty of the loving purpose and forgiving patience of God are clearly seen and firmly believed, the sure conviction is found to possess at once a wonderful and gracious power to soften the heart, to beget true repentance, and to inspire the earnest purpose of complete obedience in the time to come.

XI.

THE FORGIVENESS AND THE HELP OF GOD.

I. THE primary element in the Gospel which sinners need is the revelation of the Divine love and forgiveness, the assurance of the merciful over-looking of past sins by Him whose will and laws they are conscious that they have transgressed. It is the manifestation of the grace of God that must bring salvation. Until the Divine grace is apprehended, there is no possibility of genuine grief over the sinful past, or of an honest and earnest purpose of amendment and consecration for the future. It is only, as has been seen, when men have in their hearts the realisation of the forgiveness and mercifulness of the great God whom they have offended by their sin, that they can be led to forsake their sins, and adopt as the supreme and constant motive and guide of their lives the maxim and purpose of willing and unreserved obedience to the will of God. But, as history and experience show, whenever this is realised,

the conviction possesses a wonderful power to produce true repentance, to awaken a sincere desire to forsake all that is offensive to so kind and gracious a Ruler and Friend, to constrain to a willing and complete obedience to all His righteous will, and to inspire with hope and confidence towards Him in the persuasion that He will forget the guilty past, and will accept our faltering and imperfect attempts to reach the standard and ideal of goodness which is set before us.

Christians believe that this assurance has been given, that the revelation of the Divine forgiveness has been made, that "the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men."

But what is forgiveness? It has been defined as "the remission of the right to retaliate; the dismissal of the resentful feelings which injury may have excited; and the renewal of feelings of goodwill." In his sermon on "Forgiveness of Enemies," Bishop Butler, although giving a different signification to the term "resentment," expounds what is substantially the same view. He says, "Resentment is not inconsistent with goodwill; for we often see both together in very high degrees, not only in parents towards their children, but in cases of friendship and dependence, where there is no

natural relation. These contrary passions, though they may lessen, do not necessarily destroy each other. We may, therefore, love our enemy, and yet have resentment against him for his injurious behaviour towards us. But when this resentment entirely destroys our natural benevolence towards him, it is excessive, and becomes malice or revenge." Our obligation to goodwill does not depend, he further says, upon the moral character of our enemy; hence the duty of love and goodwill cannot be superseded by his conduct, however objectionable that conduct may be.

If this be accepted as a true account of forgiveness, it is virtually equivalent to the maintenance of love towards those who injure us, in spite of their selfishness, injustice, and wickedness, and in spite of the wrong and harm they may inflict upon us personally. Such forgiving love, as Butler contends, is neither unreasonable nor impracticable.

Dr. Dale adopts a similar interpretation of the term "forgiveness." He says that, in many cases, we "forgive men who neither acknowledge nor feel that they have wronged us. We do not allow the wrong to quench the old affection for them, or to prevent us from rendering them all the kindly offices of affection. In so doing, we are, in short, simply obeying the commandments

of Christ and His apostles: 'Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you.' . . . 'Avenge not yourselves. . . . If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink . . . Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'"¹

Dr. Dale contends, however, that we are not warranted in assuming that what it is right for us to do, must be right for God also to do. In support of this proposition, he asserts that the Divine forgiveness includes more than "a dismissal of what may be described as personal resentment against the sinner," namely, that it includes the release of "the sinner from the penalties which he has incurred by his violation of the eternal moral order." He asserts, in fact, "that at the impulse of His infinite mercy, God dismissed His personal resentment against our sinful race, that His love triumphed over His moral indignation against our sins." When we forgive an offender, we are called upon to do this,—“to dismiss our personal resentment, to love him notwithstanding his sin, and to put forth our strength to rescue him from the results of his sin. And all this God has done ; but His forgiveness also liberates us from the penalties incurred by the violation of the

¹ "Christian Doctrine," p. 237.

moral order of the universe, which ours cannot do." ¹

Thomas Erskine, on the other hand, refused to discriminate between the love and the forgiveness of God. "Forgiveness is," he said, "the permanent condition of the heart of God." "Doubtless it will appear to many," he adds, "a strange sort of pardon which does not remit the punishment of sin"; to Adam and Eve "Paradise remained barred, and the sentence of sorrow and death remained unreversed. But God had spoken in their hearing of His gracious purposes respecting them, and that was forgiveness,—all the forgiveness which they needed,—and though His hand might still be heavy upon them, it was the hand of a Father, and for their good." ² The pardon of the Gospel, he contends, is just the manifestation of the Divine character in relation to sinners. Forgiveness is the prominent feature of the Gospel; it is "God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." Similarly, Dr. Bushnell says, "The real gist of God's forgiveness antedates the penitence of men."

In the New Testament, the word forgiveness is employed solely with reference to God's

¹ "Christian Doctrine," pp. 247, 248.

² "Freeness of the Gospel," p. 40.

personal relations with sinners. It is part of the mischief which sin has worked in human nature, that it has, to a large extent, led men to substitute the notion of an official relationship between God and themselves for the relation of person to person. The relation of evil-doers to a monarch or a judge whose claims may be met by the payment of a debt, or the endurance of a penalty, is more easily appreciated than those personal relations to a personal God, from which sinful men so naturally shrink. Hence theologians have, it is maintained, complicated and perverted the idea of forgiveness, by speaking of it as an official and forensic act on the part of God. The Scriptures plainly enough, as it seems, represent forgiveness in God as essentially identical with forgiveness in men. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." "Forgiving one another, even as God in Christ hath forgiven you."

True forgiveness in both God and man involves not only the surrender of all resentment against the evil-doer, but also such a loving sympathy with him as prompts to self-sacrificing effort to regain him as a friend, and restore him to a better state of mind and heart. It is a very superficial and unreal sort of forgiveness that contents itself with merely turning its back upon

the wrong-doer, and saying no more about him. Real love cannot treat the transgressor in such a fashion. It must seek, and win, and convert the sinner; and to do so, it will willingly undertake the needed pains and expense. Sacrifice for the restoration of the offender is involved in the forgiveness of true and holy love. The ideal and perfect forgiveness of a wrong-doer embraces the entire attitude and disposition of a loving and righteous person towards him, and so includes, along with the dismissal of all resentful feelings, a sincere and sympathetic desire for his restoration to right feelings and conduct, and a painstaking and self-denying effort to secure that restoration.

Now, what men, as sinners, need to know is whether they are warranted in cherishing such a conception of God's relation to themselves. Can we believe, and if so, on what grounds do we believe that God is a Being of righteous love, a Being who, though grieved and offended by the disobedience of His creatures, still loves them in spite of their sin, longs for their repentance, and seeks by self-sacrificing effort to win and convert them?

The chief difficulties and objections which have been raised against this view of Divine forgiveness have been on the score of the claims

of law and justice. Dr. Pye-Smith, for instance, affirmed that "the question whether sinners shall be pardoned, is one of law and government." And Dr. Hodge says, "In the Old Testament and in the New, God is declared to be just, in the sense that His nature demands the punishment of sin; that, therefore, there can be no remission without such punishment, vicarious or personal."¹

Now it is significant to notice, that in the New Testament the word "justice" never occurs; and that the word "just" is only found in one passage which has any bearing upon the Divine forgiveness of sin. In Rom. iii. 26, we read, "That He might Himself be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." But here, as the marginal reading indicates, the word really means that He might be righteous, and He who maketh righteous the believer. God, of course, is and must be righteous, but the notion of distributing to every transgressor exactly what he deserves is a very different matter. The notion that the justice of God or the claims of God's Law must needs be, as it is said, satisfied by the sinner's endurance of punishment, is a non-scriptural, and, in reality, a purely pagan conception.

¹ "Systematic Theology," ii. p. 478.

The forensic theology has taught men to think of God as a veritable Shylock, who must have his pound of flesh before what is called His Justice or the claims of His Law can be satisfied.

But what a righteous person must desire to secure in others is their righteousness. Punishment administered by righteous love may be valuable as an instrument and a means towards attaining this end. But a loving and merciful Being can have no wish that the pain and sorrow should be continued when the sin and unrighteousness are abandoned. Such a Being cannot but forgive the sinner who repents and forsakes his sin. So far, in fact, as His own feelings are concerned, the spirit of love and forgiveness is there already in the mind and heart of God, leading Him to seek the sinner's separation from the sin against which He cannot but feel a holy displeasure; and then, when that separation is brought about, leading Him also to do all that may be done to relieve the penitent transgressor of the painful consequences and results of his wrongdoing.

The punishment of the sinner who clings to his sin is certainly not contrary to justice. Everything of a painful sort that befalls him is fully

deserved by him. Moreover, a righteous Being is bound, we may well believe, to punish sin as a palpable expression of His own disapproval of it; and as, at least, one necessary element and instrument in the task, from which He cannot shrink, of seeking to separate the sinner from his sin. But when the sin is forsaken, mere justice has no more concern in the matter.

The truth is not, as is sometimes said, that mercy and grace need to be harmonised with righteousness and justice; but that righteousness and mercy spring from the same root in the Divine character. Neither love nor righteousness could consent that the penalty of sin should be remitted to the impenitent sinner. Punishment is probably the kindest thing that can be administered to the wrong-doer; but in punishment, justice and righteousness have no further interest or concern when the sin is truly repented of and put away. It is incredible, as has been said, that a righteous and therefore gracious God should inflict punishment merely as vengeance, without reference to its effect upon the sinner; incredible, in other words, that God's righteousness should desire or find satisfaction in any infliction of punishment, except in so far as it is a means to the destruction of sin, to the separa-

tion of the sinner from his sin, to the restoration of disobedient creatures to the righteousness of loving, trustful loyalty from which they had departed. When that end is gained, righteousness and justice are fully satisfied. God so loved the world that, in the Person of His Son, He came to seek and save that which was lost. This is the Gospel message, the assurance of the forgiving love of the Father against whom we had sinned. In Christ, God is seeking to reconcile men to Himself, "not imputing their trespasses unto them."

II. A further element in the objective provision needed, in order to the salvation of the sinner from evil, is that of superhuman help and strength in the effort to live a true and righteous life. The assurance of the Divine forgiveness is, we have seen, the indispensable pre-requisite of repentance; and repentance, as the initial step in the way of salvation, includes the adoption of a sincere and steadfast purpose of complete obedience to the will of God for the future. But the penitent soul soon finds in the struggle and conflict with evil to which he is called, that there is a law in his members that wars against the law of the spirit, so that the good he would he does not, and the evil he would not that he

does. The disorder of his nature is such that his resolutions and his efforts in the direction of amendment and consecration are continually being foiled and frustrated. The more truly sincere and earnest he is in his purpose, the more surely does he learn that he needs some hand held out to help him out of the evil by which he is overwhelmed; that if he is to be successful in the effort to live a true and worthy life, he must have a life and strength greater than his own.

Even in pre-Christian times, men had occasional glimpses of the truth that apart from some power to be supplied from above them, they were morally helpless and hopeless. Plato said, "The noblest temper can be wrought in us only by means of that rapture out of ourselves which is the special gift of God."¹ Cicero affirmed that "No one ever became great but through the inspiration of God."² And Seneca also said, "God is very near to us; He is with us, He is in us. Within us dwells the Spirit of God. No one can become good without Him. He dwells in every righteous man. From Him comes down that Divine power which makes the mind lofty, healthy, well-balanced; for

¹ "Phædrus," p. 244.

² "De Natura Deorum," ii. p. 66.

such results can flow from nothing short of God."¹

"Seneca's morals had no more influence," as has been pointed out, "upon the character of those who received and believed them than they had upon the statues of the Pantheon." Seneca himself was accused of profligacy, and the people believed his precepts, but grew worse. Mere moral teaching "has no real efficacy to quicken the conscience or to purify the heart." The best of those who in ancient times reflected upon the moral condition of men, deplored the hopelessness of all mere human effort to vanquish the power of evil, and to raise the moral level of life and conduct. In fact, on every hand, earnest souls who have tried to master self and to attain to a life of unselfish goodness and purity have confessed how futile their efforts have proved.

The experience of Christian believers is very different from this. They are conscious of super-human influence and strength that have been given to them, whereby they are enabled to conquer temptation and to make progress in goodness and usefulness. "In me," said the Apostle Paul, "there dwelleth no good thing," but "through Christ who strengtheneth me, I can do all things."

¹ "Epistle 41."

There have, it is true, been some who have held that the only assistance which God gives to men in trying to live a righteous and holy life, is that which comes from the knowledge of Him as a God of love and forgiveness. But the overwhelming mass of Christian testimony affirms that though men cannot of themselves successfully resist temptation or live a true and righteous life, yet that the Spirit of God does so act upon the minds and hearts of men as to deliver them from the power of evil and enable them to make progress in virtue and in goodness. Testimony has, indeed, been borne by Christians in all ages that they have experienced a degree of courage in difficulty, a measure of patience in disappointment and suffering, an easy mastery over temptation, and a bright and joyous hope in looking to the future, which they are satisfied have been given to them from above.

Christ Himself is not simply a teacher or a leader. His influence and action upon men cannot be limited, it is maintained by those who have surrendered themselves to His guidance and control, to the revelation of the character and purpose of God which He has made, nor to the inspiration of His own example. The help which has been granted to His disciples goes far beyond the instruction of His words, and the enthusiasm

which His example and leadership may beget in their hearts. The despairing cry of the sin-bound soul has been converted into the pæan of triumphant hope, "Thanks be to God who giveth us victory."

XII.

THE FUNCTION OF FAITH.

THE consideration of salvation or spiritual healing, and of its relation to the assurance of Divine forgiveness and help, has brought to light the essential necessity of faith in God as a God of love and mercy. Faith in the revealed character and purpose of God is the influence, the subjective instrumentality, by which repentance is produced. It is by the conviction of the truth of the Gospel message that men are brought to desire and seek for redemption from the dominion of evil. Apart from that conviction, the initial step in the way of salvation would seem to be impossible. The change of mind and feeling in regard to sin which constitutes the beginning of a restoration to spiritual health, can only be effected when the sinner's faith accepts the revelation of the real nature and purpose of the Lawgiver against whom he has sinned.

The necessity for faith, as the condition and ground of the change from a state of sin to one of salvation, cannot be regarded as involving any-

thing of the nature of an arbitrary or abnormal requirement. Even in unfallen creatures, such trust in God is, it may be affirmed, absolutely essential as the foundation of righteousness and true goodness. As Thomas Aquinas has said, "Faith is superior to all other virtues, as being really the ground and principle upon which they depend for their true value and meaning." It was through the loss of their faith in God that men at first fell into sin and guilt, by allowing the suspicion to enter their minds and hearts that the commandments which God had imposed upon them might not be consistent with their true personal interests and welfare.

With perfect faith in God, disobedience to His commands would, of course, be impossible; an evil heart of unbelief is, indeed, the source and root of all wrong-doing. And so, on the other hand, faith in the Divine Lawgiver is the spring, the only true spring, of holy obedience. A really righteous and good life is not to be conceived of as consisting in any merely external conformity to the requirements of the moral law. The right and the good must be done in a spirit of unquestioning and unreserved loyalty to the authority of God. "The just live by faith." Wherever there exists the true principle of faith in God, there there is, at least, the living seed of all moral excellence and

development. In the life of practical religion, the all-important thing is not actions but character; actions are important, of course, but they are chiefly of value as manifesting and establishing character. In this sense it may be claimed that the Christian doctrine of faith is a commonplace of all sound ethical science.

But for fallen creatures the special, the most important, and vital aspect of faith in God, as the foundation, at any rate, of spiritual restoration and healing, is faith in the grace and mercy of God. The disciples of Christ are persuaded that the purpose for which He lived, and taught, and died, was that He might provide for men a true and solid foundation for this faith in the forgiving love of God. His life and work cannot be regarded as intended to separate pain and penalty from sin, nor to assure that spiritual healing and a new life should be followed by the attainment of peace, and hope, and ultimate blessedness. But they were, it is believed, in order to induce and enable men to repent of their sins, and to cultivate such a disposition and character as would make them meet for the inheritance of saints. So long as sin exists and is cherished, pain and sorrow will not only be experienced, but will also be regarded by the sinner as the consequence of his sin, and as the

expression of the Divine displeasure on account of that sin. But when the sin is repented of, and honestly repudiated and forsaken, it is virtually destroyed, and pain and sorrow no longer appear in the light of penalties.

In its practical aspect, to have faith in God is to accept all God's commandments as right and good, and to have the honest desire and steadfast purpose to be, in all things, loyal and obedient to His will. And it is in that faith alone that the real foundation, the spring and principle of true righteousness, is to be found. The only morality and rectitude which can be regarded as genuine and sufficient, is that which is the manifestation of a spirit of loyal obedience and submission to the appointments and requirements of the Divine Ruler. And the only loyalty to Divine authority is that which rests upon and is inspired by faith in a personal God, who is not only righteous and holy, but also good, and kind, and merciful. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Any mere outside, mechanical conformity to law is morally, spiritually, and religiously valueless, except as a subsidiary means and help towards a true and spiritual obedience.

This, as has been said, is true in the case of unfallen beings, as well as of those who have sinned. But in the case of sinners, the faith

which is the condition and the originating motive of repentance and restoration to a good and righteous life, takes the special and distinctive character of faith in a loving, merciful, and gracious Father and Helper of the weak, the erring, the guilty. It is only in virtue of such a faith that those who are consciously guilty can have confidence towards God, can dare to forget the guilty past in the hope that God also will forget it, or can venture to think that God will accept their attempts to reach the ideal set before them, and that He will so strengthen them that they shall ultimately triumph over all evil. "He that overcometh is he that believeth."

One of the most marked and most terribly disastrous consequences of sin is the bad consciousness which it begets. The consciousness of wrong done by us awakens in us the feeling and conviction that He against whom we have sinned is regarding us, and may be expected to continue to regard us, with righteous and implacable resentment. And it is inevitable to our corrupt human nature to resent with bitter and rebellious feelings the indignation with which we are disposed to believe that God regards us as sinners. A familiar proverb assures us that we dislike and hate no one so intensely and

implacably as the person whom we feel that we have wronged. As Pope puts it—

“Forgiveness to the injured doth belong,
But those ne’er pardon who have done the wrong.”

From this, the bondage and bitterness of past wrong-doing, the sinner can find no deliverance except in some distinct and authoritative assurance that his sin has not destroyed the Fatherly love and mercy of God towards him. For such assurance he needs the objective ground of some Divine self-manifestation. To provide this was, it is affirmed, the mission of Jesus Christ,—to declare the Father’s name, to reveal the loving, forgiving character of the God with whom we have to do. And it is when, and only when, that revelation is apprehended by the sinner’s faith, that repentance and salvation become possible for him.

The doctrine of justification by faith is one upon which a vast amount of thought and ingenuity has been bestowed by theologians in past times, but in regard to which a great deal of mystification and misinterpretation still needs to be cleared away.

According to Luther and the Protestant Reformers, justification is a purely forensic act,—the act, that is, of a judge sitting in the forum,

the place of judgment. Their teaching was that Christ's righteousness is imputed to believers, counted, that is, in the judgment of God, as theirs. They are supposed to be released from the punishment due to their sins, since it was endured for them by Jesus Christ; and they acquire the right to eternal life, since it was purchased for them by His obedience.

The teaching of the Church of Rome had been that justification is not a legal or forensic act on God's part, but an infusion of righteousness into the souls of believers, whereby they are made internally and personally just. The Arminians maintained that for Christ's sake the faith of the believer is counted to him for righteousness, but, at the same time, held that faith possesses positive and intrinsic merit in itself.

Calvinists, on the other hand, held that faith has no intrinsic value or merit in itself, but is simply an arbitrary condition upon which God is pleased to impute the righteousness of the Saviour. The Westminster Confession, for instance, describes justification as "an act of God's free grace, whereby He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." Dr. Hodge, in

his exposition of the Protestant doctrine, affirms that justification, as a forensic act, is something different from sanctification, from pardon, and from restoration. It is, he says, a declaration that the believer is just, or righteous in the sight of the law. The law not only no longer condemns him, but pronounces him to be entitled to eternal life. He contends that the word righteous is not used in reference to the sinner in the ordinary sense, as denoting one who is morally innocent and upright, but as meaning one against whom the law or the justice of God has no demands. In relation to a judge, the word denotes, he holds, simply a negative freedom from liability to punishment. When God justifies the sinner who believes, He simply declares that his guilt is cancelled, and that he is no longer amenable to the penalties of the law.

The Greek word used in the New Testament, *δικαίω*, to justify, primarily means to make righteous. And although it might, no doubt, be used in the sense of declaring a person to be righteous, whether that was his actual character or not, yet in the New Testament there is no text, apart from those which speak of the justification of believers, in which the term is applied to those who are not righteous. Now

those who are described as "justified by faith" are sinners—persons who, in the ordinary sense of the term, are not righteous. There are four senses in which the expression might be, and, as a matter of fact, in which it has been explained,—1. When the believing sinner is said to be justified by his faith, the meaning might be supposed to be that he is pronounced or declared to be righteous, although he is not righteous: 2. It might be interpreted as meaning that he is regarded or treated as if he were righteous, although he is not: 3. It might be understood to mean that when he is justified, he is really made righteous in the full and ordinary sense of the word: 4. It may mean that the believer is really and truly righteous, though not in the sense of being actually and practically free from all sin, and possessed of all virtue and goodness. Of these alternatives, it is surely the last only that can be regarded as compatible with the character of a righteous and holy God. And if the view of faith which has been given is a correct and valid one, there seems no difficulty in maintaining that this is the true interpretation of justification by faith.

We dare not affirm or imagine that God either pronounces a sinner to be righteous when he is not, or that he treats him as if he were

righteous when he is not really righteous. Professor Adeney—who holds that the sinner who is justified is treated as righteous, is put into the same relation to God as if he were, and had always been, perfectly innocent and good—frankly admits that, among men, this would be the dishonesty of the judge who is blamed for justifying the wicked.¹

It is distinctly enough indicated in the New Testament, that the righteousness which is by faith is something different from the righteousness which is by the law. "Moses writeth that the man that doeth the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby; but the righteousness which is of faith saith . . . with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." The righteousness of faith is, in fact, the rightness of the ruling principle, the dominant character and purpose of the soul and life of the man. The faith by which we are justified is really an active principle, and contains in it the spirit and the pledge of complete obedience. Its connection with righteousness is inward, spiritual, vital. Abraham had learned to look to God and to obey Him in the spirit of filial trust; and God declared that this spirit is righteousness.

Believers in Christ are counted righteous by

¹ Cf. Adeney, "Theology of New Testament," p. 197.

God, because they are right in spirit and in purpose. To have faith in Christ is to have the purpose to follow and serve Him, to be and to do in all things that which is right. Believers are therefore righteous so far as desire, motive, and purpose are concerned; they are "upright in heart." They have not the rightness of a perfectly good and holy life; but in their faith itself, believers have the rightness of principle, which, with the help of the spirit and grace of Christ, has in it the promise and potency of all moral attainment and excellence.

The salvation that sinners feel their need of is that they themselves should be changed, turned from sin in sincere and practical repentance, and turned to God and goodness in honest and steadfast purpose and effort. In order to effect this change there are provided and offered to men, in the gospel of Christ, the assurance of the free forgiveness of God, and the gift of the Holy Spirit of God. When these are accepted by the sinner in true faith, and with a genuine willingness to be made whole, the saving, healing, restoring process is begun. The faith of the believer brings him into right relations to God; he is justified by his faith, because in that faith there is the living germ of righteousness and goodness. And then, by the grace

of God co-operating with his own personal efforts, the work of sanctification goes on, from step to step, from strength to strength, and from grace to grace. Old things pass away, and all things become new. Our salvation is the work of God ; but it is for us also, by an inward resolution, to renounce our sin, and with faith in God and humble dependence upon the help of God, to make earnest and unceasing effort to live an obedient and righteous life.

XIII.

THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST.

CHRISTIAN faith affirms that it is through Jesus Christ that we have the objective provision which, as we have seen, is needed by sinful men in order to their salvation,—the assurance of the Divine forgiveness, and the supply of moral power and spiritual life. Experience justifies the name that was given to Him,—“Jesus.” He is the Lord the Saviour. All who have by personal faith and loyalty qualified themselves to form an opinion on the subject, agree that the mission and work of Christ constitute the necessary foundation of their confidence towards God, and of their hope of justification, sanctification, and redemption.

But the very simplicity and grace of the Gospel message are so marvellous in the eyes of sinful men that the evil heart of unbelief is often offended thereby; and Christ, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God, has been a stumbling-block and foolishness to many. Even Christian theologians have been led to construct theories,

and indulge in speculations, with a view to meeting and solving problems and difficulties which they themselves had foolishly conjured up.

The obstacle which the claims of law and justice have been supposed to place in the way of the forgiving love of God, is chiefly responsible for the theory of the sacrifice of Christ, which regards it as a substitute for the punishments remitted to penitent believers, and a satisfaction to the majesty of the broken law. Dr. Dale, for instance, in expounding and advocating this view, asserts that "the death of Christ was a satisfaction to the righteousness of God, in whatever sense the punishment of the guilty can be spoken of as a satisfaction to the righteousness of God." Augustine was probably the earliest writer to hint at a doctrine of forensic imputation, "The transference, as by a fiction of law, of men's actual guilt to Christ, and of Christ's righteousness to the believer." But he does so only as a tentative suggestion, and in another place repudiates the notion. It was not until about the end of the eleventh century that anything like a complete theory of the Atonement on these lines was developed. This was done by Anselm in his *Cur Deus Homo?* in which he urges that the attribute of justice insists

upon legal satisfaction, and so opposes an obstacle to the salvation of the sinner.

In the seventeenth century a modified form of this doctrine was advanced by Grotius, who, while rejecting the idea of the absolute necessity of satisfaction, contends for what is described as its relative necessity. God could, he held, remit the penalties of the law ; so far as His own nature is concerned, He might dispense with penalty, but, as a ruler, He could not do it without some provision by which the authority and dignity of the law should be maintained. A recent writer expresses this view when he says, "The Atonement was designed to remove all the obstacles which the honour of the law and distributive justice presented against the salvation of man." But this theory rests upon the unwarranted assumption that God occupies a relation to men precisely analogous to that of a human ruler to his subjects. Human rulers simply seek, by the fear of threatened punishments, to repress wrong-doing for the sake of others than the criminals ; whereas God seeks to subdue the evil in men's nature and to make them good by inspiring the love of goodness. This, the object of the Divine government, is one which punishment alone cannot secure.

In human governments, moreover, the penal

sanctions of the law are an expedient needed for the support of its enactments, a consideration which has no place in respect to the Divine law. The moral law is adequately sustained and honoured by the repentance and restored loyalty of the sinner, who is graciously forgiven, and the penalties of whose sins are freely remitted.

Many of those who, in recent years, have advocated the theory that the death of Christ removed some obstacle in the way of the salvation of the sinner, have more or less confusedly combined the doctrines of Anselm and Grotius, asserting sometimes that it was from the justice of God that the obstacle arose, and at other times that it sprang from the law. It would seem, however, to be mainly in connection with a conception of punishment-demanding justice that the idea of an obstacle in the way of the exercise of Divine forgiveness has exerted so great an influence in the formation of theories of atonement. The origin of this notion, that Divine justice needed to be satisfied by the exaction of penalty, it may well be affirmed, is really to be found, as Dr. John Young has suggested, "in the false views and false fears of human nature." The guilty conscience imagines that God must needs demand "something like the satisfaction which an angry and outraged

fellow-creature would demand.”¹ But this, as has been said, “is not even human nature at its best and highest. How much less can it be Divine nature?”

It was not, then, to remove obstacles springing from the righteousness, or the justice, or the law of God, that Jesus lived and died. The essential thing that men needed to be assured of, first of all, is that God really loves and pities them; that He is willing and waiting to forgive and forget the guilty past as soon as they turn to Him with contrite and obedient hearts; that He is “reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” The work of Christ as Mediator was to declare to us the Father’s name, and to convince us of His forgiving grace that was seeking to win and save us from our sin and misery. Christ’s life and death are the amplest proof of a Divine love which spared no pains, no humiliation, no anguish, that sin might be vanquished and the sinner saved from the power of evil. “In this was manifested the love of God towards us, that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.” “The sufferings and death of Christ are,” in the words of Dr. Fairbairn, “the symbols and the

¹ “The Light and Life of Men,” pp. 415, 418.

seals of the invisible passion and sacrifice of the Godhead." They exhibit God "as a Being who does not need to be appeased or moved to mercy, but who suffers unto sacrifice that He may save us."¹

It has sometimes been suggested that even creation involved a species of self-sacrifice on the part of the Creator; that by creating them God brought Himself into relation with inferior beings, and especially that in creating beings endowed with free-will, and so capable of introducing evil into the world, He consented to the existence of that which could not but be a burden and a grief to Himself. It is questionable, however, whether such speculations are of any value, or are really legitimate on our part.

We are on surer ground when we affirm that from the standpoint of the ideal of human nature, at any rate, sacrifice lies at the root of all spiritual excellence. For man, the way to a crown, to the supreme glory of his being, is by a cross of loving sacrifice for others. The universality of sacrificial ideas and institutions cannot but be regarded as some evidence of this. For although many other elements were involved in the sacrificial rites of the heathen, ideas and feelings often of an unworthy and degrading

¹ "Christ in Modern Theology," pp. 485, 487.

character, yet, ever and anon, the true conception of the sacrifice of love, as inevitable in the presence of sin and sorrow, found more or less clear and unmistakable expression. Indeed, even apart from the existence of evil needing to be relieved, there is, in some degree, present in all true love an element of sacrifice. He who loves another, delights in giving to him that which has cost him something. Parents, for instance, in their love for their children, are continually making sacrifices for them, and they find true satisfaction in making them. But in the presence of sin and evil, the love which longs to help and bless can only bring succour by submitting to pain and trouble in some form or other itself. The only way in which the strong and good can elevate and benefit the weak, the fallen, and the wretched, is by the way of the cross. The true conception of sacrifice is that of trouble, sorrow, and pain willingly undertaken for the sake of the sinful and the needy. To Christian faith, the life and death of Christ are the revelation of the self-sacrificing love of God. This was the method, in harmony with the noblest impulses of human nature, and the experience of the social relations of men, by which God sought to conquer the hearts of men, melting them into penitence, and converting

them to righteousness and goodness. It was the only method which, so far as we can see, could have been effectual. "He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

The specific form which the Divine Sacrifice of Love assumed, was that of participation with us in the pains and woes which are our common experience as a sinful race. The whole of the varied ills, sorrow, pain, and death, to which we are exposed, are regarded by us, in our consciousness of sin and guilt, as an experience that is truly deserved by us, and as a revelation and expression of the displeasure with which God regards our sin. Christ our Saviour, sinless though He was, in coming into our nature shared our experience, our sicknesses, and our sorrows. He bore not only the personal contradiction of sinners against Himself, but He endured the manifold evils which, as they fall upon ourselves, we confess to be the deserved chastisement of our offences. Under the constraining motive of His measureless and quenchless love for us sinners, He freely accepted the cross with all its shame and agony, in order that He might convince our hearts of the love and pity of our Father God, and in order that He might become "unto all them that obey Him the Author of eternal salvation," the overflowing spring of

spiritual and eternal life for those who apart from Him and His mediation were spiritually dead—dead in trespasses and sins. All that He endured was from love to us, all was on our behalf. He, the Holy and Righteous One, suffered for us—the unrighteous—that He might bring us to God. But it is not possible to suppose that to Christ the sufferings that He bore could appear in the light of penalties deserved by Him, the light in which all that we may suffer must appear to us. To His human consciousness, no doubt, the burden of misery which rests upon mankind, and which fell with such specially sad and tragic force upon His pure and tender heart and life, would stand as the symbol and demonstration of the displeasure of the Holy God against all sin and unrighteousness. And under its awful shadow He keenly realised, as a man, the terrible malignity of the sin from which He had come to rescue men. In the fellowship of loving sympathy He bore our load with us, and for us, and He bore it in order that He might set us free alike from our sin and from its penalty and curse. In His Divine love and pity He cheerfully and gladly bore the load and paid the cost which the mediatorial work upon which He came entailed upon Him. As He Himself taught, "Except

a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone ; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." Christ, in His love, consented to suffer and to die that He might become the Author of eternal salvation, and bring many sons to glory.

The clear and unanimous testimony of Christian believers is, that it is through Christ that they receive also the second great provision needed in order to their salvation from sin, namely, moral and spiritual power to enable them to turn from sin to holiness and goodness. Whilst the sacrifice of Christ was undoubtedly the manifestation of the love of God, it was love manifested with the practical purpose of supplying alike the motive and the strength whereby men may forsake sin and attain unto righteousness and goodness. Not only the testimony of those who are recognised as pre-eminently inspired men, but the experience of Christians in all ages, and of every type of temperament and every grade of culture, affirms the reality of super-human enlightenment and power supplied in and through Christ. For courage and patience, for victory over temptation, and for an indestructible hope in regard to the future, Christians have, again and again, confessed that they are indebted to the direct influence of a

living Christ. They feel that a well of living water has been opened within them. In the struggle with moral evil, in particular, this inward, spiritual gift has been felt and affirmed to be an undoubted fact of personal experience. With the apostle, they feel that "in all things they are more than conquerors through Him that loved them." In the words of Dr. Mackennal, "They are conscious of an energy in them not of themselves; they know that they are receiving power from above, and that that power is their security, the secret of their persistence in the Christian way."¹

The mediatorial work of Christ is truly apprehended in proportion as Christian faith not only sees in His life and death of sacrifice the revelation of the love of our Father God,—a love which seeks to rescue us from our sin and its curse, a love which will spare no pains and no suffering that may be needed to secure the end desired,—but also finds in the spiritual life, of which Christ is the Source and the Giver, the Power whereby we are renewed in the spirit of our minds, and transformed more and more completely into His likeness. "As sin has reigned to bring men down to death, so shall grace reign through righteousness to bring men

¹ "The Christian Testimony," p. 62.

up to life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." As Sabatier says, the apostolic benediction "expresses the unity and the sequence of the historical development of salvation: 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit;'—the love of the Father, which is its permanent cause, the grace of Jesus the Lord which makes it manifest, and the Holy Spirit who gives it reality within the soul."¹

¹ "The Apostle Paul," p. 337.

XIV.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

THE divinity of Christ has usually been treated as primarily, and almost exclusively, a topic of biblical theology. Principal Cunningham, for instance, says, "This doctrine is one of pure revelation ; the first step that ought to be taken in the investigation of the subject should be to collect the Scripture statements which bear upon it, to examine carefully their meaning and import, and then to embody the substance of the different positions thus ascertained, as constituting the doctrine which we believe and maintain on the subject." ¹

On the other hand, the position taken by many theological thinkers in recent times is that our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Son of God and Saviour of men, however we may have first come by it, derives its life and vigour from our own knowledge of His power and glory. Experience, not mere authority, is claimed as the surest ground of our belief that

¹ "Historical Theology," ii. p. 214.

He is the Son of the Eternal. Professor Herrmann says, "The right confession of the Godhead of Jesus depends on experience of the work which God performs through Jesus Christ on the human soul."¹ In his *Christ in Modern Theology*, Dr. Fairbairn affirms that "what Jesus Christ is cannot be settled by an appeal to the New Testament, either to Himself and His apostles, or to the Jews and Greeks. Before we can even approximately know Him, what the New Testament said of Him must be compared with what history has to say."² The testimony of history Dr. Fairbairn gathers up in a number of heads, which may be briefly stated as,—1. In the order of founders of religion, Jesus Christ is the transcendent Person of history; 2. He is the real Creator of Monotheism; 3. He created a religion as transcendent as His Person, and one which is ethical and universal, which introduced a new ideal of life, and is the explanation of the immense differences between Eastern and Western, and ancient and modern civilisation; 4. The Christian religion rests upon the recognition of Christ's continuous and universal presence and influence in His Church. Regard

¹ "The Communion of the Christian with God," p. 113.

² "Christ in Modern Theology," p. 378.

to His character and authority is the persistent influence by which that religion has been maintained and promulgated. So that the life of the religion lies in the Person of its Founder.

The unique impression which the personality and life of Christ produced upon His earliest disciples, and still produce upon all who candidly and earnestly dwell upon them, is and was due, in the first place, to the character and spirit of Jesus as shown during His earthly life,—His sinlessness, His patient gentleness, His unwearied beneficence, and, above all, His self-sacrificing love. And in the second place, to the spiritual power and work of Christ,—His saving, strengthening, and gladdening power in the hearts and lives of those who are loyal to Him. In brief, our conception of the person of Christ is derived from,—first, the life and character of the historical Jesus; and, second, the work He does in and for His disciples. In the case of His immediate disciples, the events of His earthly life did not suffice of themselves to convince them of His supernatural character, until after His resurrection from the dead. As Dr. Dale says, the confession came first from Thomas, in the memorable words, “My Lord and my God.” It was not until after that, that “all the

unique and inexplicable impressions which had been made upon them by our Lord's character, and teaching, and miracles, and claims, returned to them and received their interpretation. His earthly life was transfigured by the light of His resurrection." ¹

I. *What Jesus was in Himself, in His character and spirit.*—The facts of His life, as portrayed in history, can scarcely fail to suggest to all who in sincerity contemplate them that, at any rate, He was more than man. As Dr. Bushnell says, "The simple inspection of His life and character suffices to show that He cannot be classified with mankind." ²

We take up the Gospel narratives as we might do any other history or biography. We read of the mighty works which Jesus is said to have performed; and whilst they might be dismissed by us as legends or delusions, if they were the whole of what we were told about Him, yet when we come to study not simply His miraculous deeds but His character, His teachings, and His conduct generally in connection with those deeds, we soon become convinced that He Himself is the greatest miracle of all.

¹ "Christian Doctrine," p. 85.

² "Nature and the Supernatural," p. 191.

1. We find that the life described is that of a perfectly innocent, guileless being, doing wrong and harm to no one. And yet this was not because He was weak and destitute of ability. On the contrary, He manifested extraordinary power, power both of action and of self-control. Jesus Himself shows, moreover, that He is not conscious of wrong in Him or done by Him. "Which of you," He asks, "convinceth Me of sin?" His bitter enemies were unable to specify any harm or evil that He had done; and the judge who sentenced Him washed his hands to be clean of the blood of one whom he acknowledged to be an innocent man. In His exercises of devotion there was no trace of confession or penitence. If He had been a sinner, like the rest of men, His acts of devotion, as described in the Gospel story, would have been unreal and hypocritical; and His intimate friends could not but have been aware of His insincerity and self-conceit. But their firm conviction and emphatic testimony were, "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His lips."

2. We find, further, that His life, as recorded, manifests in a unique and marvellous fashion the spirit of gentleness, patience, readiness to suffer wrong without resistance. "He is poor, and hungry, and weary, and despised, insulted

by His enemies, and deserted by His friends, but never disheartened, never fretted or irritated."¹ Small trials and heavy ones, petty slights and flagrant wrongs and cruelties alike are borne by Him gently, with meek and patient endurance, with no sign of temper or retaliating wrath. When His disciples suggested that He should call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritan villagers who slighted Him and thwarted His purpose, He rebuked the resentful temper which they displayed, and meekly journeyed on to another village. He would not even plead His innocence, and prove the worthlessness of the charges brought against Him by His enemies. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so opened He not His mouth." In the extremity of the rage and malice of His murderers, His mysterious composure, self-possession, and patience constrained even the Roman Centurion to confess that the Sufferer was more than man.

3. Another feature in His character and life, as presented in the Gospel history, is His un-failing kindness and untiring beneficence. When John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to Jesus asking, "Art thou He that should come,

¹ Bushnell, "Nature and the Supernatural," p. 204.

or look we for another?" His reply was, "Go and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good tidings preached to them." Through the whole of His public life, "He went about doing good." He never refused to listen to the appeal of the suffering and the needy. With untiring diligence and devotion He ministered to the sick and the sorrowful, and spoke words of comfort, hope, and helpfulness to the crowds who felt that He was in truth a Teacher sent from God. His tender solicitude for the needs of others was manifest from first to last,—from the thoughtfulness with which He supplied the lack of provision for the guests at the wedding feast at Cana, to the loving consideration which He displayed for the solace and support of His sorrowing mother as He hung in the agony of the Cross. His example has indeed been the model, and, along with His teachings, the inspiring motive of all philanthropic efforts to ameliorate the condition of the masses.

4. But behind all the outward and practical manifestations of sympathy and unstinted readiness to serve, there was the heart of love from which they sprang. Men felt that there was no

impropriety in His describing Himself as the Good Shepherd who layeth down His life for the sheep; but that it was the simple and literal truth that He had come, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." There was in Him personally, moreover, a winning charm which led little children to run into His arms, or gather singing around Him, and which led "wretched outcasts to cling to Him with sure instinct as their true and only friend." It was seen and felt by all who came into contact with Him that He was really bearing the sins and woes of men as a burden upon His compassionate heart. Men learned, in short, from the life of Jesus, as they had never learned before or elsewhere, what love is.

Such, then, was Jesus of Nazareth; such were His character and spirit; so uniquely perfect was He in sinlessness, patience, beneficence, and self-sacrificing love, that He can only be adequately and properly described as being, in truth, a moral miracle, a Superhuman Person.

II. *What Christ does in and for His followers.*
—Our faith in the divinity of Christ does not rest simply upon the impression which the facts of His earthly life produce; but is confirmed, and,

perhaps, even more fully warranted by the experience—our own or that of our fellow-men—of the spiritual changes brought about in men, and the testimony given by those who are the subjects of them. Numbers of persons have experienced such a change in their character and life as cannot be accounted for except by reference to some supernatural power. They are conscious that the inner change experienced is not due to natural development, nor to force of will. Outward reformation may be possible by the exercise of will, but that falls far short of a change of inner character. Or, if the inner character does become, to some extent, improved, the result is brought about very slowly. There is little or no possibility of an immediate reversal of the dominant spirit and type of the inmost life by mere force of will, or by the favouring influence of changed circumstances. Paul from being a “persecutor and fierce enemy of the Cross, became, through the grace of Christ revealed to him, a preacher of the Cross, sacrificing all things, enduring all pains and severities, for the name of Christ, his Master.” “By the grace of God, I am what I am; . . . new created in Christ Jesus unto good works,” is his own explanation of the change which had taken place in him. And the history of the con-

version of multitudes corresponds with that of the apostle.

Celsus in opposing the Christian doctrine denied that it was possible to effect any sudden change of character from bad to good; such as the Christians spoke of. He says, "Those who are disposed by nature to vice, and accustomed to it, cannot be transformed by punishment, much less by mercy; for to transform nature is a matter of extreme difficulty."¹

Justin Martyr, on the contrary, affirmed, "We, who once were slaves to lust, now delight in purity of morals; we, who once prized riches and possessions above all things, now contribute to the common use; we, who once hated and murdered each other, now live in common with them, and pray for our enemies, and endeavour to persuade those who hate us unjustly, that living according to the admirable counsels of Christ, they may enjoy a good hope of obtaining the same blessings with ourselves from God, the Ruler of all."² Christians in those days were satisfied, and Christians in the present day are satisfied that no natural causes can at all fully account for their spiritual experiences, but that they are in themselves the evidence of their

¹ Origen, "Contra Celsum," iii. 65.

² "1st Apology," ch. 14.

supernatural cause and origin. It is not merely the greatness of the change in the governing principle of the life, by which, in place of self-love, love to God and consecration to His will becomes the dominant spirit of the life, that makes it impossible to regard it as effected by any human strength or merely natural influences; but the permanence of the experience still further confirms the Christian in ascribing it to supernatural influences. The utmost regularity of habit in the discharge of duty has comparatively little power to insure against spiritual relapse and deterioration. The Christian is persuaded that it is only by the constant grace of Christ that he is kept from falling and making shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience.

Dr. Liddon well says that "Christians show forth the moral creativeness of Jesus Christ in their own deeds and words; they are living witnesses to the solitary and supreme power of changing the human heart. They were naturally proud; He has enabled them to be sincerely humble. They were, by the inherited taint of their nature, impure; He has in them shed honour upon the highest forms of chastity. They too were, as in his natural state man ever is, suspicious of and hostile to their fellow-men,

unless connected with them by blood, or by country, or by interest. But Jesus Christ has taught them the tenderest and most practical forms of love for man viewed simply as man. At this moment there are millions of souls in the world that are pure, humble, and loving. But for Jesus Christ our Lord, these millions would have been proud, sensual, selfish.”¹

All, or nearly all, who have taken Christ as their Lord and leader, join in testifying that at times moral and spiritual strength far beyond their own has been given to them. Apart from Christ, they know that in any attempts they made to master self and live a life of unselfish goodness and true purity, they were beaten back, baffled and disheartened. Whereas now, by the grace and help of Christ—in the conscious possession of an endowment which they cannot but regard as supernatural—they are enabled, again and again, to triumph over the evil that is within them and around them. They declare, moreover, that they have sometimes realised a wonderful peace, a joy unspeakable, and a hope full of glory, even in the midst of pain, and sorrow, and outward desolation. And they affirm that in seasons of devout meditation and in the exercises of worship, or in loving, self-forgetful devotion to the

¹ “Bampton Lectures,” p. 129.

cause of righteousness and beneficence, they have felt a solemn but exultant delight in the conscious nearness and gracious favour of their Father God. They are assured that for these experiences they are indebted to Jesus Christ, that they have been wrought in them by the spiritual power of a living Saviour. And as the result of such experiences, they are constrained to own Him as not only their teacher and helper, but as their Lord and God. It is, in short, upon Christian experience, far more than upon any evidence of prophecy, or of physical miracles, or of abstract argument, that Christian faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ really rests.

On this ground we are warranted in regarding Him as a person so unique and supernatural that we need not hesitate to affirm—that He is entitled to our unreserved trust and loyalty; that He is the rightful object of Divine worship; that He really was what He claimed to be, in a unique and transcendent sense—the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh, Immanuel.

It is true, of course, that it is only those who accept the revelation of the forgiving love of God which Christ has made to men, who are fully qualified to appreciate the evidence upon which this doctrine of His divinity rests. And yet it is also true that this conception of the unique

personality of Christ, as the incarnate Son of God, is necessary to give complete validity and true significance to His work as mediator.

Now whilst this might at first seem to suggest and involve something like a case of reasoning in a circle, it is not really so. The two positions are, in fact, simply elements or aspects of one and the same spiritual truth and reality. God is revealed in Christ, because the Divine glory, full of grace and truth, is revealed in Him. We know and confess that Jesus is Divine, because the truth He proclaims, the love He displays, and the gracious power He promises and imparts to those who believe and obey Him, appeal to us as being themselves of God, the most unmistakable witnesses to the fact that in Him "dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

XV.

THE IDEAL OF PERSONAL CHARACTER.

EVEN if men were destitute of volitional power, and so could not be regarded as moral and responsible beings, each individual might still possess a definite and distinctive character. He might inherit certain original capacities attended by their appropriate desires, which would, of course, constitute the impelling motives of his conduct. This character, useful or noxious, amiable or hateful, as the case might be, might be modified and moulded by training and culture. This, in fact, according to many evolutionists, is what man really is. They teach that "the powers of intellect and the forces of sensibility are all merely products of the inherited tendencies and forces of the past, as they have been fixed and transmitted in and through the structure of the nerves and the brain." According to this view, each man's character is the "product of circumstances as truly as is any material object; and in his

constitution and his activities, he is merely a mechanical product, or at best an organic growth." ¹

But even then it would still be true, as already said, that he would have a character, though without any endowment of moral freedom. As a matter of fact, indeed, every man has a characteristic physical organism which very largely affects his emotional and intellectual nature, and so affects also his natural character as an individual man. The peculiar physical organisation which he possesses he derives from his parents and ancestors. It is, to a considerable extent, moulded and determined by such agencies as race, climate, health, and temperament. Even his more strictly intellectual faculties are, to a large extent, the products of inherited tendencies and of favourable or unfavourable training. Various influences conspire to strengthen or modify the original features of the natural character which each man possesses. Personal character is more or less affected by the entire environment of the individual. He is what he is, as a moral agent, partly because of the influence of education, public sentiment, national laws, and the general type and tone of the society in which he moves. Almost every

¹ Porter, "Elements of Moral Science," p. 62.

family has its peculiar characteristics; the moral and spiritual "atmosphere of each household is, in a greater or less degree, a life-giving stimulant or a noxious and stifling poison." The school has a similar, if slighter, influence. Public opinion and general custom carry the individual, to a considerable extent, with them forward or backward as the case may be. Early training and instruction do a good deal towards determining the permanent ethical ideas and ideals, and in modifying the natural and inherited tendencies and dispositions of each member of society.

A further influence which is, to a larger extent, in a man's own hands, at any rate at the outset—although its effects often constitute a permanent modification of character which it is completely out of his power to undo or interfere with—is the principle of habit. What has been designated the ascetic and gymnastic of virtue, prescribes the course of discipline, exercise, and training by which the character may, in accordance with the laws of habit, be cultivated and developed. By such instrumentalities as self-examination, self-denial, meditation, and worship, and by diligent effort to realise a worthy ideal in the spirit of humble dependence upon the grace and help of God, the character may be continuously improved,

and habits of virtue may be more and more firmly established in the soul and in the life.

Now it is this inner moral condition and quality, perfected and made permanent by the co-operation of these manifold elements and factors which constitutes the true personal character of the man, and which gives ethical significance to his activities. It is in this sense that it is sometimes said that the man makes the motive, and not the motive the man. The heart—by which, of course, is denoted the essential character and disposition of the man—is properly regarded as the true object of moral approbation or condemnation. “A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things, and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things.” “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.”

Various ideals of personal character have, at one time or another, been expounded and commended for the guidance of personal training and culture, which cannot but be pronounced to be inadequate and unworthy.

The Stoical ideal, for instance, arrived at by purely rational investigation, was abstract and cold, and destitute of attractive or controlling power. The Epicurean ideal had regard to man

mainly as a sentient being, capable of pain and pleasure, and endowed with intelligence simply that he might be able to secure the one and guard against the other. Altruism, again, presents an ideal of character which, in its absolute devotion of self to the pleasing of others, ignores the essential dignity and worth of the individual soul.

The true ideal of character is one which, in contrast to that of Epicureanism, assigns to the natural desire for happiness a subordinate position, and yet recognises, in opposition to the altruistic doctrine, a man's own spiritual condition, needs, and development, as having legitimate and inevitable claims upon his consideration and his effort. It embraces, moreover, elements of goodness and nobility which can be apprehended and appreciated—not by rational or speculative thought, as the Stoics taught, but by spiritual intuition and discernment.

Self-culture cannot be overlooked as a primary object of thought and effort. Regard to bodily health and strength, to the right and helpful use of material property, to intellectual development, to refinement of disposition and taste, to personal purity, to the maintenance of self-control, and to the acquirement of consistency and stability of character, is demanded of every man by reason

of the moral and spiritual worth of his own nature.

The obligation of love towards our fellow-men, and of kindly service in furtherance of their interests, is equally obvious and imperative. Realising that there is at least something that is potentially of worth in every human soul, we shall be constrained to set before ourselves an ideal of life which will include the doing of good to all, especially in the direction of improving and perfecting their moral and spiritual quality and excellence.

It is, however, in the recognition of the will of God, which is involved in our religious faith, that duty to self and duty to our neighbour find their true foundation. They can, in truth, be adequately performed only under the motives which religion supplies. The spirit of trustful, loving, and loyal consecration to the authority and the claims of God is the constitutive principle and the inspiring motive of all genuine righteousness and goodness alike in disposition and in conduct.

Further, the true ideal of character and life includes an element that is still higher and more spiritual, an element that is more intimately concerned with our personal relationship to God Himself.

The words of Augustine, "Thou, O God, hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee," are true to the experience, not alone of Christian men and women, but of earnest souls in every land and in all conditions. The heart of man, as man, craves for union with God. Even amid the darkness and degradation of heathenism, men yearned for communion with the Eternal Spirit, of whose nature and relationship to themselves they were only very vaguely conscious. For that communion they vainly sought in the observance of their sacrificial rites. By partaking of the flesh of the victims whom they had dedicated to their gods, they fondly hoped that such fellowship might be attained, and that by sharing in a common meal and banquet, they might be raised to a footing of friendly alliance, and even of personal incorporation, with the divine beings whom they worshipped.

So, too, the various ascetic practices so widely prevalent have, to a considerable extent, been prompted by the desire to get rid of the earthliness and impurity which were felt to hinder the union and communion of the soul with the Divine. Alike in the grosser forms of asceticism practised among heathen nations, and in the life of austerity and seclusion from the world adopted by monks

and hermits in Christian times, the aim and motive were, at least in part, the satisfaction of the "quenchless desire of humanity" for closer fellowship with God.

With the truer and worthier thoughts of the Divine nature which have come to men through the recognition of the Divinity of Christ, that fellowship is sought in nobler forms and by more spiritual methods. The Eternal Life which was with the Father has been manifested unto us in order that, as Christians believe, our fellowship may be with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

No description of personal religion is now more universally accepted than that which represents it as consisting in love to God. The love of gratitude cannot but be acknowledged to be an essential and vital element in the feelings with which it is fitting that we should regard the Heavenly Father and the gracious Saviour to whom we owe so much. The dream of many saintly souls, that it is possible and necessary that we should aim at an ideal love to God, of which gratitude should form no part, into which no thought of His kindness shall ever enter, but in which God shall be loved solely on the ground of His perfections, is practically unattainable by creatures so dependent and so indebted

to the undeserved mercy and favour of God as we are. For sinners, the primary and strongest motive and inspiration of the affectionate devotion and loyalty that we owe to Him are found in the revealed love of God for us. It is the acceptance by our faith of the revelation of His gracious and loving character which first draws out the affection of our hearts towards Him.

But this principle of grateful love does not exclude the higher elements of admiration, sympathetic appreciation, and disinterested affection for what God is in the eternal and infinite perfection of His own nature. The pure and ideal love of adoration is, in fact, an essential element in our spirit and feeling towards God; essential that it may be worthy of its object, and that we may be preserved from a narrow-minded, selfish kind of gratitude that would value God Himself simply because of what He does for us, and essential, moreover, that we may realise the true and full blessedness of love. The true love of even a human friend, the true filial love of a son for a father, whilst not ignoring the benefits that may have been conferred, may and ought also to go out in sympathetic appreciation of all that is good and noble in the character of the person beloved, and should lead to that sweeter happiness of personal communion in which he is

valued, appropriated, and served for his own sake alone. And so it is in relation to God. Love to God seeks its goal in reverent admiration, in sympathetic appropriation, and in enthusiastic devotion.

Such love demands and prompts to the interchange of thought, desire, and aspiration. Communion of spirit, at the same time, expresses and sustains itself by intercourse. Love shut up in the heart, and debarred from utterance, is almost sure to languish and die; it must be maintained by something of the nature of converse. When Christ wished to assure His disciples that He treated them as friends, He declared, as the evidence and pledge of His friendship, "All things that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you." It is for us to reciprocate His friendly dealing with us, to walk and talk with Him, as friend with friend.

The instinct of prayer, so universal because so natural to man, lies at the very root of all religious faith and thought and life. It is, as Sabatier has said, "prayer which distinguishes the phenomena of religion from all those which resemble or lie near to them, such as the moral or æsthetic sentiments." Prayer is "the movement of the soul bringing itself into personal relation and contact with the mysterious Power of whose

presence it is conscious."¹ Prayer, however, that is mainly petition, may be very earnest and very sincere, and yet may have in it but little that is not selfish, and very little of true and loving communion with God. The ideal attitude of man to God is one in which he freely opens his heart to Him, seeking His approval of all his plans, acknowledging Him in all his ways, and humbly relying upon Him for direction, help, and blessing.

Further, such love and intercourse will constrain us to sincere desire and consecrated effort for the furtherance of the purposes of God, and for the extension of the Kingdom of God. Loving God, His aims and wishes will become ours, and we shall evermore be seeking—seeking first, seeking most intently—His kingdom and righteousness. We shall spare ourselves no effort, no pains, no sacrifice, that His will may be done in us, and by us, and in and by all our fellow-men. Strength and influence will be unreservedly and ungrudgingly employed in helping to bring all men to righteousness and goodness and love.

¹ "Philosophie de la Religion," p. 24.

XVI.

THE IDEAL OF SOCIAL LIFE.

A RELIGION which is fully in accord with the principles of human nature cannot ignore the social instincts and impulses of that nature, and must recognise the fact that men were made to live in society, and in society to realise the fullest, noblest, and happiest life of which they are capable.

Friendly intercourse and communion with our fellows is the natural prompting of our spirits, and is essential to their full activity and development. This is especially the case in regard to the feelings and experiences of the religious life, involving, as it does, the deepest and strongest feelings, aspirations, and convictions of the soul. It is practically impossible to keep them shut up in the privacy of our own hearts without doing violence and harm, not merely to our religious life, but to our nature itself. The friendship and

fellowship of Christians are, in fact, both natural and inevitable to beings whose nature is what ours is, and who are conscious that they are the subjects of the redemptive grace and power of Christ. "The social element in religion," Sabatier has said, "pertains to its very essence. The term 'communion of souls,' is a term of religious origin and complexion. The experience which it denotes, one of the most remarkable phenomena of social life, is perfectly realised only in and through religion. The same faith and common exercises of worship not only draw souls towards one another, but cause them to live in each other, and build them into a spiritual unity in which each finds itself multiplied by all the rest."¹

"The Christian community arose at first," as Neander has pointed out, "from the peculiar nature of the higher life that belonged to all true Christians."² "They necessarily felt an interest in one another's presence and fellowship. This natural association constituted a means of edification and mutual Christian helpfulness." "The earliest idea of a Christian Church," says Dr. Stoughton, "is that of a brotherhood for the maintenance and diffusion of religious con-

¹ "Philosophie de la Religion," p. 103.

² "Planting of Christianity," p. 23.

victions." The first announcement of the Gospel, as Dr. Westcott also has remarked, is connected with the establishment of a kingdom.

The Kingdom of God, the Church of Christ, the new society and brotherhood of men, in its simplest and most comprehensive signification, is neither more nor less than a friendly fellowship of all those who hear Christ's voice, of all, that is, who are personally loyal to Him. Among those who recognise each other as fellow-citizens of the Heavenly Kingdom, fellowship and brotherliness cannot but be spontaneous and inevitable.

Combination, moreover, not only for the purposes of worship and mutual edification, but also for evangelistic effort, is the natural outcome of their common faith and aims and hopes. Alike in the practical service of our fellow-believers, and in the aggressive efforts to which religion calls us, the necessity and high value of union and co-operation cannot be overlooked. By free and voluntary combination, those who seek the same ends by the same means are able to accomplish greater results than they could possibly secure by solitary and individual efforts.

Further, as a matter of fact and experience, such association is found to be practically helpful in the maintenance and in the propagation of

the Christian life. As has been said, "Anything that is difficult to do, any exercise of resolution, any kind of self-denial, is made easier by the aid of sympathy, by knowing that other persons are doing the same thing." Our own faith is confirmed as we listen to the clear, unfaltering affirmation of loyal trust and joyful hope on the part of others. Conscience is awakened, and zeal is enkindled by the knowledge of the self-denying efforts and the unflinching patience of comrades in the conflict. Timid John has been encouraged by the boldness of ardent Peter. The devotion of Rizpah has awakened David to a sense of duty neglected. The very name of a leader like Gideon has been an inspiration of strength and eager courage. There is, in fact, a contagion of enthusiasm and of goodness; and the friendship, fellowship, and intercourse of religious men is the way in which these inherent principles of human nature are applied to the maintenance and extension of the Kingdom of God. Christian churches have been constituted for the purpose of supplying the opportunity and the medium for the manifestation and the cultivation of this, the social aspect of the life of religion.

In order that such association and fellowship may be natural and really helpful, it is

obvious that there must be perfect freedom and spontaneity. Sympathetic intercourse can neither be compelled nor restricted by arbitrary or conventional arrangements. In Christian friendship and co-operation there cannot but be circle within circle. We naturally cherish the warmest and closest sympathy and affection towards those who most nearly agree with our own ideas as to what is true, and obligatory, and becoming. The strongest bonds will always bind us to those who are most completely in unison with us; but hard and sharp lines of demarcation and limitation must sooner or later fade and disappear. The range and limits of the closest religious fellowship are obviously determined and prescribed by the nature and scope of the purposes for which it exists. The natural boundary of our friendship and communion will be according to the extent of our personal knowledge. There can be little or no exchange of personal sympathy and service between those who know nothing of each other's character and life. There may, it is true, be a measure of mutual esteem and interest even between those who are known to one another only by report, but in the full sense of the word this can hardly claim to be true fellowship.

But, on the other hand, anything approaching

to a claim to exercise authority and control over the individuals who share in friendly communion cannot but be resented as an unwarrantable interference with freedom of personal thought, judgment, and action. The spirit of true Catholic fraternity condemns and forbids an intolerant restriction of our sympathy and friendship and help to those who agree with us in every particular of faith and opinion. To attempt, indeed, to impose upon the manifestation of Christian brotherhood arbitrary and artificial conditions and limits of any kind is unnatural and absurd. The imposition of authoritative creeds and the enforcement of ecclesiastical regulations and decrees as conditions of religious association are alike foreign to its essential spirit, and fatal to its maintenance and development.

True Christian brotherhood, embracing all whom we believe that Christ has received, will scrupulously respect the independence and personal responsibility of each, as a fellow-servant of the common Master to whom alone he standeth or falleth. The judgment of our fellow-Christians in matters of religious opinion and service may be, and ought to be, listened to with respectful consideration, but should never claim to possess, nor be regarded as

possessing authority over our own faith and conduct. As Guizot has said: "We can conceive that a man may abandon to the authority of his fellow-men the direction of his material interests; but when it extends to the conscience, the thought, and the abdication of self-government, it is a moral suicide, a servitude a hundred-fold worse than that of the body." "In the very earliest period, the Christian society presents itself as a simple association of a common belief and common sentiments. In the various congregations there were men who preached, taught, and morally governed the congregation, but there was no formal magistrate, no recognised discipline."¹ The society of which Christ was the Founder and Head was not one whose rules were to be enforced by any punishment of an ordinary or secular sort. In fact, "instead of giving definite laws to His society to be enforced by its members upon one another, He gave to every member of it a power of making laws for himself." And there never was more real unity, as Dr. Pressensé has said, "than in those times when it rested on the perfect law of liberty. In the first century we have a Christianity based upon a common faith, but

¹ "History of Civilisation," lect. 6.

exercising no constraint but the constraint of love upon the individual." ¹

In primitive times baptism and the Lord's Supper were simply, as it were, badges accepted by those who desired to be regarded as belonging to the fellowship. The only certificate or evidence of Christian faith was the evidence of life and character. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples." Any who adopted and wore the badge of discipleship unworthily simply brought upon themselves the judgment of condemnation.

The simplicity and spirituality of Christian fellowship and co-operation in those primitive times stand out all the more clearly when compared with the later ideas and organised forms of Ecclesiasticism, as these gradually attained their definite and disastrous development, and as claims to authority on the part of Churches were advanced and submitted to, which came well nigh to smothering the Divine life in the souls of men.

Free, voluntary, local gatherings and associations of fellow-Christians require no edict for their origination, and are hampered and really degraded by any prescribed forms and regulations. Freedom and individuality are of

¹ "The Apostolic Age," p. 335.

the very essence of the religious life and character. To attempt to fetter or restrict such association is to run the risk of crippling and destroying the religious life itself. In the actual practical expression of religious fellowship, it is essential that there shall be absolute freedom of combination in all departments of social life and Christian work. The vital thing, of course, is the spirit of helpful brotherhood; and in the selection and adoption of the various modes of association that may seem to be most suitable for the attainment of the specific ends that are desired, there ought to be the most perfect liberty and spontaneity.

The social millennium to which Christians look forward, the complete establishment of the kingdom of heaven upon earth, will be realised when true brotherly fellowship and co-operation among all who own each other as Christ's disciples are unfettered and all-embracing, purged from arbitrary conditions, from all that is formal, traditional, or stereotyped, and degraded no longer by prescribed forms and authoritative regulations; when all vestiges of sacerdotalism, sacramentalism, and ecclesiastical authority have been got rid of; when the universal prevalence of catholicity and charity has put an end to the intolerance of differences whether in opinions, forms of worship,

or methods of Christian enterprise and service; when all are content cordially to recognise the sovereign independence of every Christian brother, and practically to admit that to his own Master alone he standeth or falleth; and when the idea of the authority of men over men in the sphere of religion, which has been the source of most of the perversions and abuses to which the social principle in our religious life has been exposed, has been completely and for ever exorcised.

Many of the systems and institutions of Christendom cannot but be regarded as among the things that are to be shaken and to be removed or, at any rate, seriously modified; but the Kingdom of God, the true Communion of Saints,—in spite of the anxieties and forebodings of those who mistakenly identify certain institutions and organisations with the spiritual kingdom,—cannot be moved, but must continually extend and for ever endure. Against it even the gates of hell, we may surely believe, cannot prevail.

The faith of the Christian anticipates the coming of that Kingdom, when Jesus shall reign in every land, when all His subjects shall be of one heart and one mind, and in a perfect social life of brotherly fellowship, and cordial co-operation shall spontaneously and eagerly, with no

intrusion either of hindrance or of constraint on the part of their brethren, strive to maintain the principles and promote the interests of the Commonwealth of truth and righteousness and love.

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